

RAM GEETA

THE GOSPEL OF LORD RAM

{The Divine Teachings of the incarnate Supreme Being}

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English presentation by:--

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn by]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

“RAM GEETA”

THE GOSPEL OF LORD RAM

{ The Divine Teaching of the incarnate Supreme Being }

PREFACE

The word ‘Geeta’ (also written as ‘Gita’) literally means a ‘song’, a ‘Geet’. So we can say that the phrase ‘Ram Geeta’ means the ‘divine song of Lord Ram’ that is meant for the spiritual welfare of the living being.

It’s a ‘song’ because it touches the heart; it’s a ‘song’ because its melody directly invigorates and rejuvenates the spirit; it’s a ‘song’ because it attracts the mind of even an initially uninterested lay-person by its captivating charm and succulence, enthralling the reader and the narrator alike, thereby helping in spreading the Lord’s divine message in a simple language sans the complexities of the scriptural texts, giving the world a nectar of spiritual bliss at no cost and no effort.

The spiritual message of Ram Geeta is easy to understand and implement, and it is the easiest method for obtaining peace, happiness and bliss even while a person lives in the world and it paves the way for the ultimate liberation and deliverance of his soul.

‘Lord Ram’ is an incarnate Supreme Being, and ‘Geeta’ is the Lord’s gracious teachings and advice for human kind. The word ‘Geeta’ is derived from the word ‘Geet’, meaning a song. Therefore, the ‘Geeta’ is the Holy Song of the Divine Being in the form of Lord Ram’s teachings for the welfare of the world at large.

The “RAM GEETA” can also be aptly called “THE GOSPEL OF LORD RAM”.

This book presents to the reader a comprehensive and exhaustive exposition on the holy teachings of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu. These teachings of the Lord show a person a practical way to attain spiritual bliss and fulfillment even while he or she lives an ordinary life in the mundane world, going about one’s duties in a normal way but with a completely changed attitude and outlook.

Since these teachings come directly from the Supreme Being’s mouth, they acquire extraordinary importance and value. They should be looked upon by all the creatures like a ship’s crew looks eagerly towards the lighthouse in a choppy ocean. They act as the North Star to guide a creature when all other navigational kits fail him in life.

Here, we shall be blessed by two such sources for the Ram Geeta. One is the holy book known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ (popularly known as the famous Ramayana) by Goswami Tulsidas, and the other holy text is the ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ by sage Veda Vyas. The original texts are supplemented by their line-by-line English transliteration to help those readers who do not know either Hindi or Sanskrit.

The Ram Charit Manas highlights the devotional and spiritual aspects of the Lord’s teachings and how they benefit a person in his day-to-day problems of life in a

simple and colloquial language, while the Adhyatma Ramayan centers around the philosophy of the magnificent Upanishads, known as the Vedanta, and it highlights the metaphysical and theological angle of the same teachings of the Lord. In both these holy texts the Lord has enunciated and elucidated upon the esoteric concepts enshrined in the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas and the Upanishads in simple language understandable by the common man so that the abstruse knowledge is brought within his reach.

It must be noted at the outset that both the texts deal with various aspects of spiritualism, metaphysics, devotion, theology, etc., and no confusion or dichotomy or distraction exists between their texts in any manner whatsoever. The only difference that does exist is the choice of the medium of instruction—for while the Ram Charit Manas employs the vernacular language of Hindi and its local dialect known as Avadhi, the Adhyatma Ramayan uses Sanskrit, the language of the scholars. But notwithstanding the language used as a means of conveying the divine and holy message of the Lord, the essence and the message itself is the same.

For the purpose of our book ‘Ram Geeta’, we shall cull and present only those sections of these two holy texts in which Lord Ram has taught himself. Hence, the quotations will be direct and first hand.

This book is divided into two sections—Section 1 will present Lord Ram’s teachings in the holy book known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’, and in Section 2 we will read about the Lord’s teachings in the ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’.

The ‘Ram Charit Manas’ was written by Goswami Tulsidas who is regarded as one of the greatest saint-poets of medieval India, and this book is extremely popular amongst the masses and is universally acclaimed as a bench-mark of literary finesse in the realm of all devotional classics ever produced in Hindi, more specifically in ‘Avadhi’ language which is a local dialect and an off-shoot of Hindi. Its charm is in the simplicity of its language and presentation style that not only directly touches the heart but is also able to present the complexities of scriptural philosophy in a language that is understandable by the common man. Its succulence of narrative, and its spiritual and devotional quotient has never been matched by any other book describing the story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, that is popularly known as the ‘Ramayana’.

The ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ on the other hand is in classical Sanskrit, the language of ancient India in which all the primary scriptures were written. It was penned by the legendary author Veda Vyas who is famed for his work of classifying the primary text of the Vedas into four main divisions, segregating their philosophical part and naming them as the Upanishads, and also for writing the voluminous 18-Purans as well as the Bhagvad Gita/Geeta.

The ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ is primarily on the line of the philosophical and metaphysical teaching of the Upanishads, while the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ lays more stress on the grand virtue of Bhakti or having devotion for Lord God as a means of fulfilling one’s spiritual aspirations.

Both these wonderful spiritual books have been included in our present volume titled “Ram Geeta: The Gospel of Lord Ram, the divine teachings of the incarnate Supreme Being”.

Finally, I must make it clear that the real ‘Author’ of this Book is the Lord himself, and that I am merely an inert pen that he used to fulfill his divine mission. So

therefore, I deserve no credit or praise for anything. If, however, this Holy Book helps a spiritual seeker in his path of life and his journey to find spiritual happiness and succour, then I will surely feel happy and thankful to the Lord for making this 'nectar of the spiritual life' available to the world through me.

I present this effort at the Holy Feet of Lord Ram with a bowed head and a humble word of submission:--

"My doctrine is not mine, but 'His' that sent me; if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine; for he that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh 'His' glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him' (Bible, Gospel of St. John, 7/17-18). 'The words that I have spoken to you do not come from me. The father who remains in me does his work' (Gospel. St. John, 14/10), 'What I say, then, is what the father has told me to say' (Gospel. St. John, 12/50).

'Show me your way, O Lord; teach me your path (4). Lead me in your truth and teach me. For, you are the God of my salvation. On you I will wait all the day (5). Remember, O Lord, your tender mercies and your loving kindness (6), for your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great (11). My eyes are ever towards the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net (15). Turn yourself to me and have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am desolate and afflicted (16). Look on my afflictions and my pain and forgive all my sins (18). O, keep my soul and deliver me; let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in you (20). [The Bible, Psalm, 25]

'For you are my rock and my fortress. Therefore for your name's sake, lead me and guide me (3) for you are my strength (4). Into your hands, I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth (5). I trust in you, O Lord; I say 'You are my God' (14), my times are in your hands (15), make your face shine upon your servant; save me for your mercy's sake (16). [Bible, Psalm, 31]

'The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trusted in him and I am helped. Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise him (Psalm, 28/7). 'To the end that my glory may sing praise to you and not be silent. Oh Lord my God, I will give thanks to you for ever (Psalms 30/12).'

'May my speech (read my books) be pleasing to him, and as for me, I will rejoice in the Lord' (Bible, psalm, 103).'

'And 'finally, my bretheren, rejoice in the Lord' (Bible, Philippians, 3/1).

What more can I say!
AMEN!

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.

Date: 1st September, 2015

Place: Ayodhya.

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“RAM GEETA”

THE GOSPEL OF LORD RAM

{ The Divine Teaching of the incarnate Supreme Being }

Section 1—RAM CHARIT MANAS

(with Transliteration of Verses)

Canto 1.1

NOTE: Two systems are prevalent for the numbering of the verses of Ram Charit Manas that have been adopted in this book.

One is the abridged universal system that follows the following pattern—first comes the number of the Chapter or Canto, this is followed by the number of the Doha this particular Chapter or Canto, and finally comes the number of the line of the preceding Chaupai that is in question or is being quoted.

The other is the more elaborate system that details the name of the Chapter, followed by the relevant Doha number and the Chaupais or verses that either precede it or follow it.

It should be noted that the ‘Doha’ is the base which is employed to locate the relevant Chaupais/verses in the text of Ram Charit Manas. For instance, when we wish to locate a particular Chaupai in the text of Ram Charit Manas, we first go to the relevant Chapter (say, Baal Kand which is Chapter no. 1), then locate the relevant Doha (say Doha no. 3 of this Chapter), and then finally it becomes easy to precisely locate the Chaupai that comes either before this particular Doha or immediately follows it.

‘Ram Charit Manas’ has 7 Chapters or Cantos, and each Chapter/Canto has a number of Dohas which are two-line couplets acting as short pauses and separating two sets of Chaupais. The last words of the two lines of the Doha rhyme with each other. The Doha has a wider width of the line as opposed to the lines of the Chaupai, and therefore is like the base upon which the Chaupai stands like a pillar standing upon a foundation. The foundation is always broader than the pillar it supports. While a single Doha consists of 2 lines, the Chaupai on the other hand consists of a minimum of 8 lines, and can go on to have many more lines. Each of these lines of the Chaupai is further divided into two equal halves, with the last word of the first half rhyming with the last word of the second half.

To help the reader to locate a particular verse of Ram Charit Manas, an example is given below using both the methods cited above.

EXAMPLE:

Suppose we want to locate the following verse which is the very first verse quoted in this book.

एक बार प्रभु सुख आसीना । लछिमन बचन कहे छलहीना ॥ ५ ॥

ēka bāra prabhu sukha āsīnā. lachimana bacana kahē chalahīnā. 5.

Now, how do we locate it?

According to the abridged system of numbering, its location is: Ram Charit Manas, 3/14/5. It simply means: First we go to Chapter 3 (which is Aranya Kand), then locate Doha no. 15, and then find the above verse which is the fifth verse that precedes this Doha. [Each Chaupai or verse has been individually numbered.]

According to the other detail system though, the location becomes easier as it would say: 'refer—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 15.']

We shall quote the original verses of Ram Charit Manas one by one, and then read what Lord Ram teaches us.

Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17 in which the Lord has preached Laxman, his younger brother.

Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, his divine consort Sita, a manifestation of Shakti, and his younger brother Laxman who was a revealed form of the Adi-Seshnath, lived for some time in the beautiful area of the forest known as Panchavati during their 14-year forest sojourn.

One day, Laxman asked the Lord some questions on spiritual, metaphysical and devotional topics. The Lord answered them as follows—

एक बार प्रभु सुख आसीना । लछिमन बचन कहे छलहीना ॥ ५ ॥

सुर नर मुनि सचराचर साईं । मैं पूछउँ निज प्रभु की नाईं ॥ ६ ॥

मोहि समुझाइ कहहु सोइ देवा । सब तजि करौं चरन रज सेवा ॥ ७ ॥

ēka bāra prabhu sukha āsīnā. lachimana bacana kahē chalahīnā. 5.

sura nara muni sacarācara sā'īm. mai'm pūcha'um' nija prabhu kī nā'īm. 6.

mōhi samujhā'i kahahu sō'i dēvā. saba taji karaum carana raja sēvā. 7.

Once upon a time, Lord Ram was sitting cheerfully in a relaxed mood. At that time, Laxman (his younger brother) approached the Lord (because he wanted to learn something about spiritual and metaphysical topics), and said politely words that were honest and free from pretensions. (5)

[That is, Laxman earnestly wished to be enlightened about certain things which he decided to ask the Lord to explain and clarify. He did not ask these questions to see if Lord Ram had an answer for them; he was not testing the Lord and his knowledge. Laxman was not examining the Lord, nor was he teasing the Lord with teasers to test the Lord's knowledge, wisdom and erudition, or attempting to create an impression upon the Lord that he had high intellectual thinking, was very wise and contemplative because

such questions of high spiritual value had risen in his heart in the first place. None of these things existed in the mind, heart or demeanours of Laxman when he approached Lord Ram with an honest desire to learn and seek clarifications. He was not pretending to be eager to learn while actually intending to either test the Lord's wisdom or to tease him in any way.

It ought to be noted here that this is the standard method adopted in our ancient scriptures, especially the Upanishads, when great metaphysical philosophy, profound spiritual truths, great doctrines, esoteric secrets, inviolable scriptural axioms and maxims et al were revealed by erudite and learned sages and seers when their disciples asked them pointed questions to which they answered in detail. Otherwise, this profound knowledge would have remained confined to the pages of the scriptures without benefiting the common man.]

Laxman said—‘Oh Lord of the gods, the human race, all the sages, seers and hermits, and all other creatures of this creation. I ask something from you because I highly regard you as my Lord (and therefore I feel free to approach you with my query as I know it is only you who can correctly enlighten me and make me wiser with the eclectic spiritual knowledge and wisdom which I wish to acquire). (6)

Oh Lord! Explain the things to me and give me that spiritual wisdom which will inspire and motivate me in such a way that I abstain from everything else and abandon all my involvements with this mundane and mortal world, and instead devote myself fully in serving your holy feet. (7)

कहहु ग्यान बिराग अरु माया । कहहु सो भगति करहु जेहिं दाया ॥ ८ ॥

kahahu gyāna birāga aru māyā. kahahu sō bhagati karahu jēhim dāyā. 8.

Explain to me about ‘Gyan’ (pronounced as Gyaan; meaning spiritual wisdom that leads to enlightenment), ‘Vairagya’ (pronounced as Vairaagya; meaning renunciation, detachment and dispassion towards all things material and irrelevant for one's spiritual welfare), and ‘Maya’ (pronounced as Maayaa; meaning delusions arising out of ignorance of the Truth and Reality, leading to confusions, perplexities and hallucinations). And then tell me about ‘Bhakti’ (the virtues of devotion, dedication and submission for the Lord) that makes you become merciful and benevolent upon those who possess this eclectic and grand spiritual virtue. (8)

दो०. ईस्वर जीव भेद प्रभु सकल कहौ समुझाइ ।

जातें होइ चरन रति सोक मोह भ्रम जाइ ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

īsvara jīva bhēda prabhu sakala kahau samujhā'i.

jātēm hō'i carana rati sōka mōha bhrama jā'i. 14.

Oh Lord! Explain to me properly the difference between the Ishwar (the Supreme Being; the Parmatma) and the Jiva (the living being)—so that I can have affection, devotion and faith in your holy feet on the one hand, and all my ‘Shoka’ (grief, sorrow, torment), ‘Moha’ (infatuations, attachments, attractions for this deluding world of material sense

objects and desire for self-gratifications) and ‘Bhram’ (delusions, confusions, perplexities) are removed or dispelled on the other hand.’ (Doha no. 14).

[Note—Laxman has asked the Lord to enlighten him about the following points in these verse— (i) Gyan, (ii) Vairagya, (iii) Maya, (iv) Bhakti, (v) Ishwar, and (vi) Jiva respectively. Then he says that this divine knowledge will help him to overcome his spiritual problems and mental ignorance that robs him of his peace of mind and spiritual bliss, that makes him get entangled in the web of worldly delusions and attachments that suck him in a vortex of ever-increasing grief and misery that arises in the heart of a man due to ignorance of his true self, of his truthful identity, as well as about the reality of this world. This eclectic and divine knowledge will dispel all his attachments with things that have no pith and reality, and in its wake free him from the countless confusions and perplexities that he faces and which subtly keep his intellectual mind guessing and vexed.

The Lord’s advice and teaching will not only help him to dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions that has mired his mind and intellect, but also enlighten him with pristine knowledge of the truth and reality that would act as the rejuvenating light illuminating his inner self as well as his mind and intellect with the brilliant light of knowledge (Gyan) effusing out from the holy scriptures. This grand knowledge is very abstruse and therefore needs explanation and elucidation. Who else will be better placed, more competent and wiser to expertly and properly explain the esoteric spiritual, theological and metaphysical knowledge enshrined in the holy scriptures, to expound upon them and make their essence easily understandable by the common man, more than the Lord himself?

It ought to be noted here that these concepts have been elaborately dealt with in a number of Upanishads. Though it is not possible to delve into them here in detail, a brief guide by way of references where these topics are especially elucidated in detail will be in order.

The concept of *Gyan* is truthful knowledge of what constitutes the absolute, eternal, universal, incontrovertible and irrefutable Reality and Truth in this creation. ‘Gyan’ is truthful knowledge about the reality; knowledge in all its sublime connotations; knowledge in all its glorious forms; a comprehensive knowledge which does not leave anything to be known; knowledge that can help the seeker obtain liberation and deliverance for his soul from the fetters have been shackling it to ignorance and delusions.

Therefore, ‘Gyan’ in terms of metaphysics is spiritual awareness and enlightenment which makes a man have an access to that knowledge about the great Truth of existence that is eternal, ethereal and divine in nature, a knowledge that is enlightening and liberating. This knowledge and awareness leaves nothing more to be learnt and pursued by a spiritual aspirant. It is the culmination of his journey of quest of the Truth about himself and about the rest of the creation.

Gyan is also synonymous with *self-realisation*. What is ‘self-realisation’ has been elucidated in, inter alia, the following Upanishads:--

- (a) Rig Veda = Atma Bodh Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-21.
- (b) Shukla Yajur Veda = Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 55, 61-71.
- (c) Krishna Yajur Veda = Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 7-9, 22, 68-69, 73, Canto 3, verse no. 1; Tejo-bindu Upanishad, Canto 2-4 and 6; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 81-110.

- (d) Atharva Veda = The *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 47, 53-59.

How true Gyan is kindled has been described in Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 76 as follows—“The fire is always present inherently in the firewood, but it is kindled or made to make its physical presence visible only when this wood is vigorously rubbed as done in the case of fire sacrifices when an Arani is used to light the fire.

Similarly, the light of Gyan, i.e. the illumination provided by enlightenment and wisdom is only brought to the fore by constant and diligent practice. It needs steadiness of purpose and unwavering commitment on the part of the spiritual aspirant to kindle this light of wisdom and enlightenment (that would help him to see who he really is—i.e. to become ‘self-realised’ and then progress further to realise that this ‘self’ is the non-dual and conscious Atma which is the microcosmic image of the supreme transcendental cosmic Atma of the entire creation at the macrocosmic level).

In other words, though each individual possesses the light of wisdom and intelligence that is inherently and naturally present in him for the simple reason that all have a brain and all have the same consciousness flowing in their bodies, but if this divine faculty is not properly polished, trained and harnessed then it would remain dormant and untapped like the fire in the firewood (76).”

Characteristics of those who are possessed of Gyan have been described in:--(a) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Paingalo-panishad, in its Canto 4; (b) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahm Bindu or Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2 (full).

What is true Gyan has been described in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, and Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 14, 18, 24, 48-54, 65; and *how to obtain it* has been explained in Canto 1, verse no. 34-37.

Relationship between Gyan and Mukti—References = Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2; Brahm Bindu/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5.

This relationship has been explained in *Brahm Bindu or Amrit Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 5 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Let us see what it has to say on the subject—“A wise and erudite man should endeavour to control or restrain his Mana and train it to inculcate dispassion towards the deluding and entrapping attractions proffered by the sense objects of this material world only till the time the Mana has not been trained to remain focused on the heart and the eternal fount of bliss and happiness that resides in it. When the Mana becomes one with the heart, i.e. when the emotions and thoughts are concentrated upon one object without pulling the creature in opposite directions, it is obvious that peace and bliss are obtained by him.

The dissolution of the Mana (mind) while focusing on the ‘self’ residing in the subtle heart in the form of the Atma (the pure consciousness; the self)—i.e. when the creature is successfully able to keep his attention focused on his inner self where the fount of eternal bliss known as the Atma resides and prevent the mind from wandering in the external world and attempting to find the illusive peace and comfort there—is tantamount to obtaining Gyan and Mukti by the creature.

Everything else, all other interpretations and connotations of the terms Gyan and Mukti (liberation, deliverance) are merely elaborations of this great metaphysical, theological and spiritual truth as expounded in and enunciated by the scriptures. [In other words, turning the Mana away from the material world of impermanence and delusory charms, and instead diverting its energy and efforts to the inner self where the eternal, divine and glorious Atma representing the supreme transcendental consciousness known as Brahm resides, is the main aim of studying and hearing the scriptures. This is the main aim of the scriptures and their teaching, and if this aim is achieved successfully, then the rest become redundant. Otherwise, one can go on reading reams of paper, debating the scriptural texts and listening to decades of innumerable lectures and still achieve nothing worthwhile.] (5).”

The realisation or awareness that Atma is, inter alia, different from the body, and is the true identity of a creature, is called ‘Gyan’. This Atma is a very unique entity and is called the ‘true self’ of the creature. Gyan refers to self realisation and attainment of enlightenment about the absolute Truth and Reality in this creation. It encompasses a broad swathe of philosophy which is taught by the Upanishads, called Vedanta. The difference between ‘Gyan’ and ‘Vigyan’ can be succinctly summed up in the statement—‘Brahm is’ or ‘Lord is’. This awareness and firm

conviction of its truth is Gyan, while to say truthfully that 'Brahm is I' or 'Lord is I' is called Vigyan.

The concept of what consists of truthful form of Gyan in the context of metaphysics and spiritualism has been explained in a number of Upanishads. Here we shall quote a few of them—such as (a) Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 15-18; (b) Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12; (c) Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14; (d) Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 22.

The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 15-18 describes what truthful Gyan is and what Agyan is.

Relationship between Gyan and Atma has been enunciated in Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 60 which affirms that the Atma, the pure consciousness, is Gyan personified. To quote—"I (the pure conscious Atma, the true self of the creature) am an image and fountainhead of complete Gyan, i.e. knowledge that is eternal, ethereal and divine, knowledge that is enlightening and liberating.

When the light of Gyan is lit in my heart, the latter (heart) is illuminated with the divine light of consciousness where no darkness representing delusions and misconceptions can ever hope to survive. This fills the heart with immense contentedness and blissfulness. It effuses out of my being and forms a halo of a divine glow around me. As a result, I become an embodiment of light myself. [That is, this light of 'Gyan' completely lights up my inner and outer self, and it radiates out of my heart like the light coming out of the wick of a lighted lamp.]

I represent all the hues and shades of thoughts and emotions that exist in this creation (60)."

The *three types of Gyan*—According to Shaarirako Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 13, there are three types of Gyan. They are Sata Gyan, Raja Gyan and Tama Gyan. To quote this Upanishad—"The knowledge of the eclectic, non-dual, immutable, eternal and absolute Truth of existence (i.e. the knowledge of the cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly everywhere and without no notion or concept of 'life' has any meaning) is regarded as Satwic Gyan (or the best and the excellent form of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment which paves the way for a man's self-realisation and his ultimate liberation and deliverance from this world of birth and death marked by ignorance, delusions, horrors and torments that are never ending). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called 'Satya Gyan' or knowledge of the Truth.

The knowledge pertaining to Dharma (i.e. that knowledge which enlightens the man about his moral obligations, duties and responsibilities as well as making him aware of what are considered as noble, righteous and auspicious virtues, deeds or things in this world) come under the category of Rajsic Gyan (because such knowledge would automatically and naturally inspire him to get involved in doing good deeds and avoiding the bad ones). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called 'Dharma Gyan' or knowledge of Dharma.

But that knowledge that is covered by a veil of darkness signifying ignorance, stupidity and delusions, leading to all sorts of misconceptions and illusions about the truth and reality, the darkness in which phantoms and ghosts are seen, comes under the category of 'Tama Gyan', or the knowledge dominated by darkness (13)."

The *seven steps to Gyan* have been elaborately described in Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse nos.21-47 of the Sam Veda tradition.

In this context, there are two other relevant concepts—Gyan Yoga and Gyan Shakti. (a) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature. (b) Gyan gives sufficient power, strength and wisdom to the creature which enlightens it about the

good and the bad, about what is beneficial for it and what is ruinous for it. It is the empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called Gyan Shakti, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn't suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully.

The concept of Gyan has been explained in Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.

Difference between Bhakti and Gyan and the fact that *Bhakti is superior to Gyan* and a better spiritual pursuit for the aspirant has been explained in the Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, in its Uttar Kand, Chaupai 11-16 and stanza 'ka' of Doha 115, and Chaupai 1-8 and stanza 'ka' of Doha 116, to Doha 120, the crow saint Kagbhusund preaches Garud, the legendary eagle, the mount of Lord Vishnu, the difference between Gyan and Bhakti. In the course of the discourse it is made clear why the path of Bhakti is superior to and better than the path of Gyan in order to attain one's spiritual goal of attaining Mukti or Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for the soul).

The relationship between Bhakti (devotion for God), Gyan (truthful spiritual knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation and detachment from this deluding world of material sense objects) is outlined in the Ram Charit Manas, 7/120/14-15.

Next we come to the concept of *Vairagya*. It is the precondition to developing Gyan—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 of Sortha (a sort of Doha) no. 89 Ka. It says—"Can Gyan (true knowledge) be acquired without the help of a wise Guru (teacher); can Gyan (true spiritual knowledge leading to enlightenment) be acquired without Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion and detachment from delusory world ridden by ignorance); and can true happiness and bliss ever be obtained with having Bhakti (devotion and love) for Hari (Lord God). This is the declaration of the Vedas and the Purans (hence it is unquestionably correct because it is ancient and time-tested wisdom)."

"Anyone who has the priceless gem in the form of Bhakti (unflinching devotion and purest form of love) for Lord Ram in his heart can never have any sorrow or grief even in his dreams; he is free from them"—refer Ram Charit Manas, 7/120/9.

The Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 47 describes the state of living with complete renunciation of all things worldly, known as 'Sanyas', in the following way—"A high degree of renunciation, detachment, dispassion, non-involvement and contentedness in which all the Sankalps (volition, ambition, determination, resolution etc.) vis-à-vis the world are exhausted is known as 'Sanyas'."

The term 'Vairagya' means complete renunciation and detachment towards everything that is non-truth and detrimental to the creature's spiritual wellbeing. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 4 and 37 lists certain qualities which a spiritual aspirant must possess if he is to be an honest person who has actually accepted the vows of Vairagya.

The term Maya—*Maya* is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother; a progenitor; something that creates', while the other half refers to the 'notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty'. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours or creates uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions, doubts and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The

term Maya is used to define this entire complex phenomenon at once. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance inspite of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that Brahm employs to create delusions. Maya is the deluding power of the supreme Authority in creation known as Brahm that has been used by him to create the sense of duality. The factual position is that everything is one and the same, and the different views of them is simply an illusion just like one sees a mirage in a desert and thinks it to be real whereas everyone knows that it is a physical phenomenon created due to the effect of excessive heat on desert sand, and it is the deluded mind that thinks it to be real though it is well aware that such things do happen in a desert and it is wise advice not to follow this illusion.

Maya has three subtle forms; hence it is called *Trigunamayi Maya*. These forms represent the three basic constituent qualities of creation, called the Gunas, that give Maya its inherent nature and characteristic quality. These three Gunas are—Sata, Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvment leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These *three qualities* together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any 'Truth' after rigorously examining the 'truthfulness' of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the 'truthful Truth'. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute 'Truth', he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Purva Kand/Canto 1, verse no. 10, describes these three types of Mayas. This Upanishad's Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 9-10 describe the effects of Maya, verse nos. 15-18 the relationship between Maya and the Atma, and verse nos. 44-45 the fact that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma as well as of Brahm.

The Atma Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, verse nos. 26, 28-29 are very explicit in the principle that all the spiritual problems that are created for a Jiva, the living being, are the cause of Maya, and that by eliminating Maya he can easily overcome them.

How the conquering and subsequent *elimination of Maya helps the creature* to conquer and sub-sequentially eliminate the world and its delusions has been described in Mantrikopanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 4-8.

The Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 49 describes why it is important to overcome Maya in these words—“Only those persons who have cleansed their inner self of all taints and blackening soot created by Maya (representing all sorts of delusory and ignorance-based conceptions and misunderstandings pertaining to the actual reality and truth) are able to see the reflection or image of the Supreme Being in their inner self. This image is as glorious as its principle who has his own self-created body (i.e. who does not live in some other body like the creature’s Atma which lives in another gross body when it takes birth in this world), is self-illuminated, and is the universal witness and observer of everything in this creation (which implies that he is present everywhere, inside and outside of everything, at the same time, and also in all phases of time such as the past, the present and the future). Therefore it follows that those who are covered by the veil cast by Maya and tainted by its evil shadow of deceit and illusions can never hope to see this glorious Divinity shining in their inner self (49).”

Next we have the concept of *Ishwar* and *Jiva*.

Ishwar is the cosmic causal body of the immanent, all-pervading and omnipresent Brahm. This *Ishwar* has the counterpart in the individual creature or *Jiva* as its causal body and is then known as *Pragya*—that which is aware, knowledgeable, wise, enlightened, intelligent, erudite, sagacious, expert and skilled. These are the attributes of Brahm who has revealed himself at the cosmic level in the body known as *Ishwar*, and at the micro level in the causal body of the individual creature as its *Atma* known as *Pragya*. Why is the causal body ‘*Pragya*’? It is because of the light of wisdom, enlightenment etc. emanating from the self-illuminated *Atma* that resides inside its inner chambers. This *Atma* is surrounded by the bliss sheath much like the embryo surrounded and protected in the mother’s womb by the embryonic membranes.

Ishwar is honoured by epithets which highlight some or the other of his majestic glories. Some of them, inter alia, are the following—*Satya* (truth), *Shiva* (auspicious), *Sundar* (beauty); *Satt* (eternal), *Chitt* (consciousness; knowledge), *Anand* (beatitude and felicity); *Akchar* (imperishable; the eternal ethereal word), *Uttam* (the best, the most exalted, the ultimate), *Purush* (the primary Male Spirit; the supreme Spirit), *Parmatma* (the supreme Soul of creation), *Prakriti* (primary Nature), *Purshottam* (the best *Purush*; the most exalted holy spirit), *Pragya* (knowledgeable, wise, skilled, enlightened and conscious) and *Vibho* (omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent).

The term *Ishwar* has been described in Paingal Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 4.

The Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 50-52 define the term *Ishwar* very succinctly as follows—

“Verse no. 50 = The *Ishwar* (the Supreme Being who is the cause of the entire creation, including the *Prakriti* and *Maya*) is called ‘supreme and almighty’ as he possesses the authority and power to control this *Maya* (*Prakriti* or Nature) and keep it subservient to him. The three unique characteristic qualities or virtues of this *Ishwar* are the following—(a) to keep *Maya* under control (*Vashyamayattva*), (b) to be non-dual and unparalleled (*Eka*), and (c) to be omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise (*Sarvagya*) (50).

“Verse no. 51 = This *Ishwar* (the Supreme Being) is predominantly auspicious, truthful and holy (*Satwic*), he is all-inclusive and all-encompassing (*Samashti*), and is a witness to everything in this creation (i.e. nothing is hidden from him--*Sakshi*). Being endowed with these unique eclectic qualities, supernatural powers and divine virtues, the *Ishwar* is able to create this world or decide not to do so, and even conclude what has already been created (51).

“Verse no. 52 = In this way, the pure cosmic Consciousness possessing all the eclectic and divine virtues and supernatural powers, such as being Sarvagya (omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise) etc. is called ‘Ishwar’ (52).”

Why the Iswar became a Jiva (creature) has been described in Paingal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and Canto 2 is fully dedicated to answer this question.

Difference between Jivatma and Parmatma—This has been explained in Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4 as follows—“The four states in which a Jiva (living being) exists are the following—Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya. The fifth state called the Turiyatit state is beyond these four.

In other words, the same Atma appears to exist in four different forms depending upon these four states of a creature’s conscious existence. Hence, the Atma that lives in the Jagrat state is called ‘Vishwa’, in the Swapna state it is called ‘Taijas’, in the Sushupta state it is called ‘Pragya’, and in the Turiya state it is called ‘Tathastha’ (literally meaning non-involved, indifferent and completely neutral). The Atma or consciousness that exists beyond these four states, the Atma which exists in the transcendental state called Turiyatit, is known as the ‘Parmatma’—or the supreme Atma or the transcendental Consciousness. Since it is in ‘transcendental’ state of existence which goes beyond all the known states of worldly existence, it is natural that it rises above the gross and the mundane, and instead remains free from all the faults and shortcomings that are associated with worldly existence—i.e. the Parmatma is immaculate and devoid of all taints and corruptions that might have shrouded the Atma when it assumes a gross body while it lives in this world. [This is the reason why the Parmatma is compared to the sky because the sky stays above the gross world known as the earth and does not have any of the physical limitations of the earth.]

Again, since the wise ascetic has already realised that his true ‘self’ is the Atma that lives in the Turiyatit state of existence, it is obvious that he is like this Parmatma. So he exclaims upon this eclectic discovery—‘I am Brahm (the Parmatma)!’

A person who lives perpetually in this Turiyatit state is deemed to be free from the limitations imposed by the other four states of existence. It may be argued that this Turiyatit state incorporates all the other four states of existence, but in actual practice it is perpetually a completely neutral state, and anything that is profoundly and eternally neutral cannot be said to have bias towards any one or the other thing. Since there is no reversal of this state of Turiyatit, i.e. once a man reaches this transcendental state of existence he would not go back to the other four states of existence, he would not be aware of the gross world and his gross organs as done in the Jagrat state, he would not dream as in the Swapna state, he would not be in the temporary state of rest in the Sushupta state which is a transient state as the creature oscillates between the Sushupta and Swapna states while asleep, and he would not even have any junior level of spiritual evolvment as exemplified by the Turiya state which is higher than the Sushupta state but lower than the Turiyatit state. This is because he has reached the highest point in his spiritual journey and has reached its pinnacle or citadel. There is no existence beyond it; it is the supreme state in which the consciousness can ever expect to exist. Hence, it is honoured by the epithet ‘Param’—one that is supreme and beyond which there is nothing.

Since the eternal and truthful Atma (here referring the cosmic transcendental form of the Atma known as Consciousness, rather than the microcosmic form of the Atma that lives inside the body of the individual creature as its Jiva-Atma) is the only conscious and living entity that exists in all of these states of existence, it is deemed to be the only one witness of their presence.

[The gross body ceases to exist in the other states except the Jagrat state. The subtle body consisting of the mind ceases to exist in the Sushupta state. The causal body that harbours the individual’s Atma ceases to exist when the creature dies and leaves the gross body. So, none of them are eternal. The Atma itself, though it is eternal and immaculate by nature, becomes mired in the delusions of the world, allows itself to be trapped in the web-like snare created out of its

own free will, then remains engrossed in doing so many deeds and suffering from their consequences, has various desires and assumes so many roles voluntarily. Hence, it is also not apparently steady. In other words, the Atma that is called a 'Jiva Atma' is influenced by the environment in which it lives; it is tainted by its surroundings. As compared to this situation, the Parmatma is unaffected by worldly things and is beyond the reach or influence of anything gross and mundane that pertains to this creation, whether it is good or bad. Hence, in this scenario, the only entity that remains constant and unchanging is the Parmatma, the supreme form of the individual Atma which is also known as Brahm. That is also why the latter is called the Absolute Truth—because the latter does not change.

A simple illustration will help to clear the idea. The celestial sun is unmoving and shining brilliantly in a uniform manner. But when seen from earth, it appears to move and even change its brilliance depending upon a number of environmental factors such as the presence of clouds, humidity, dust particles etc. in the atmosphere, etc. The sun also appears to rise and set, is hidden from view behind dark clouds, or even disappears during solar eclipses. But even a high school student knows that none of this is true. Similarly, the disc of the moon appears to have its own light whereas it merely reflects the light of the sun, and it also appears to change its contours every night though this is due to the different angles from which it is viewed from earth every night as a result of its revolution around the earth. The same argument applies to the Parmatma vis-à-vis the Jiva Atma. The Parmatma is like the sun, and the Jiva Atma is like the moon that shines in the light of the sun.]

Since the Parmatma represents that superior aspect of the cosmic Consciousness that is absolutely neutral and detached from everything, including Maya (delusions), it is beyond the purview of the four normal states of conscious existence of a creature. The Atma living in the Turiyatit state is called a Parmatma. In this state, it cannot be called a 'Drasta' of anything, or the one who sees anything, observes anything, or is a witness to anything—because this is a completely neutral and detached state of existence in which the mind and all the other faculties are defunct, and in which nothing matters for the super-conscious Atma¹.

In such a case, should one regard the Jiva (the living being) as the Drasta? [That is, if the Parmatma is not the Drasta or the one who sees, observes and witnesses anything because of its sublime cosmic existence and neutral character, then can one treat the creature that has a gross existence in a visible world of material sense objects as the seer, observer and witness?]

No, the Jiva (living being) is also not the Drasta in the true sense because his 'true self' is the Atma that is a most subtle and sublime entity which is really not involved in anything related to the gross body as well as the gross world. This Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma (which is the 'supreme Atma' or the cosmic Consciousness which is the macrocosmic form of the individual creature's Atma). The Atma possesses all the virtues of the Parmatma in the sense that it is equally neutral, dispassionate, detached etc. from anything gross and untrue. The problem arises only when the creature, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, begins to identify himself with the gross body in which this Atma lives and erroneously begins to treat this body as his 'true self and identity'. This body lives and interacts with the gross material world of sense objects.

So, when the creature begins to identify himself with the body, he becomes a 'Drasta' because then he begins to 'see and perceive' this world through the organs of perception of the body. Now he becomes someone who 'sees', someone who perceives, feels, tastes, touches, smells etc. The world becomes his object of perception or the 'Drisya'. The Drasta (the seer or observer) is affected naturally by the Drisya (the objects or things seen or observed). The sight influences him and creates either a positive or a negative impression on his sub-conscious and psyche. Such a creature cannot remain immune from, unaffected by or indifferent to his surroundings and what he 'sees' simply because his mind and intellect are not attuned to see the 'truth'. Had they been so, the creature would have realised that the body—which actually does the seeing or perceiving of the objects of the world—is not his truthful identity at all in the first

place. The fact that he has not realised what his true nature is becomes the breeding ground for illusions of his being a 'Drasta' or the seer. Such a 'Drasta' gets embroiled in the affairs of the gross world because he 'sees' this world as being true—though this perception is absolutely erroneous.

On the other hand is the person who can be regarded as a 'neutral Drasta or a non-Drasta'. This wise man knows that his 'true form' is not the body but the Atma that lives in this body. Such a wise and erudite man would do things in this world like another 'ordinary' man, but with the difference that he does not get involved in anything the body does at the emotional and sub-conscious level. His mind neither gets involved in what his body does, nor does it register or stores any information in its memory bank regarding the humdrum affairs of the world.

Therefore it is derived that the same Jiva Atma (a living being) can either be a 'Drasta' or a 'non-Drasta' depending upon the level of its wisdom and intellectual development in the spiritual sphere. That is, everything depends on the level in which a living being's Atma or pure consciousness exists in this world. In other words, at the lower level and grosser level of existence of the consciousness, the Jiva becomes a 'Drasta', while at the higher level of existence he is a 'non-Drasta'. A Drasta is involved in and influenced by the world, while the non-Drasta is uninvolved and neutral.

In other words, if the Atma relates itself to the world—whether at the gross level corresponding to the Jagrat state known as the waking state of consciousness in the physical world, or at the lower subtle level corresponding to the Swapna state known as the dreaming state of consciousness in the world of dreams—then this Atma is known as the 'Drasta'. But when the same Atma lives in the Turiya state of consciousness that transcends these levels of existence of consciousness—when it is completely detached from the world, the physical body and the subtle mind—then it is known as the 'non-Drasta'.]

Now suppose it is said that the Jiva's (living being's) true nature is not to remain involved in worldly affairs as his 'true form' is the Atma which is pure consciousness that is equivalent to the cosmic Consciousness called the Parmatma, then this logic also does not hold its ground of validity. This is because as soon as the Atma assumes a gross body, it is immediately shrouded by the ego and pride of having a body. It is almost impossible to find a living being or a Jiva who would not accept that he has a body. In fact, the very concept of being a 'Jiva' rests on the premise that the Atma has a body. Therefore, if this notion of being a possessor of a body is done away with, it is only then that the Jiva becomes equivalent to the Parmatma. [The Atma is proud of the body because this body gives the Atma its form, its identity as an individual; it is by the medium of the gross body that the Atma is able to perform stupendous tasks in this world, achieves success in various fields and acquire name and fame; it is the body which helps the Atma to do deeds that are righteous, noble, auspicious and holy. The Atma is only a Spirit without a form, and to be identified it needs a physical form which the body provides. Hence, the Atma is proud of its association with the body. This stokes the ego and makes the Atma possessive of the body.]

In other words, the *difference between a Jiva and the Parmatma* is just like the difference between the Ghatakash and the Mahakash. [The Ghatakash is the space present inside a hollow pitcher, and the Mahakash is the vast open sky outside the vessel. The Ghatakash is separated from the Mahakash by the physical body of the pitcher. Actually there is no distinction between the space inside and outside the pitcher, for if the vessel is broken the two spaces coalesce instantly and effortlessly.] The two names of the same thing are given only in an abstract manner for the purpose of study, for in actuality there is no difference. So therefore, a Jiva has a distinct existence only as long as it has the body—or is conscious that it has the body, and as soon as this awareness of the body is removed, the two—the Jiva and the Parmatma—become one.

[Another instance is cited now.] The same breath moves out and in the body as exhalation and inhalation. While doing so, it makes two distinct sounds—'Ha' and 'Sa' respectively. That is, while moving out the sound is equivalent to the letter 'Ha' of the Sanskrit language, and when

moving in the sound is equivalent to the letter ‘Sa’. This forms the Mantra ‘Hans’, meaning a divine Swan. In other words, the Jiva’s Pran or vital winds also display artificial distinction as being exhaled breath and inhaled breath though the air is the same entity that cannot be distinguished and mutated. A wise, self-realised and enlightened ascetic understands the esoteric message encrypted in this sound of Hans. He realises that the breath is telling him that he is like the divine bird Swan which is regarded as the purest and the wisest amongst the birds². So, a wise ascetic always concentrates upon his pure and enlightened form known as the Atma that has no physical body like this wind or air element which too has no physical body. The Atma then becomes equivalent to the Parmatma.

With this sublime and eclectic spiritual view firmly established in his inner self, the enlightened ascetic discards all sense of ego and pride vis-à-vis the body. And when this happens, he becomes one with the Parmatma (as explained above) (4).”

The great metaphysical doctrine that the *Jiva and the Ishwar are one and non-dual* has been elucidated in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47, and (ii) Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77.

The *relation between a Jiva and Brahm/Ishwar/Parmatma* has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4 (difference between Jiva and Parmatma); Canto 9, verse no. 10 (difference between Jiva and Prakriti); Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 5 (Jiva and Brahm are one). (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 5; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 52-53, 70, 73. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda = Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2 (subject of Jiva vis-à-vis Brahm).

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurāṇ, 4/9/6 describes this concept of a *Jiva being a reflection of the Supreme Brahm* as follows—‘My salutations to the Supreme Being who is almighty and all-powerful. The Lord has entered my heart, enlivens my vital Pran (breath), my limbs and my sense organs, and also empowers my faculty of speech—all of which would otherwise have remained dormant and ineffective.’

The reason *why the Jiva remains trapped in this world* has been elaborately explained in Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-13; and Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-8. How to *find liberation* from this world has been explained in this Upanishad’s Canto 5, paragraph nos. 9-13.

The concept of *Jiva and Jiva-Atma* has been beautifully brought out in Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition in its verse no. 15.

Why a Jiva takes a new birth has been answered in—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 71, Canto 4, verse no. 40; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 31; Canto 3, verse no. 24; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/10-12. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 12, 33; Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse nos. 4-14; Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse no. 1-6. (iii) Atharva Veda’s Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 10-13, and Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-13; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 23; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse no. 1; Mundak 3, section 2, verse no. 2; Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 10; Prashna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 9-10, 13-16; Canto 3, verse no. 7, 9-10.

Relation between a *Jiva and Prakriti (Nature)* has been explained in (i) Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse no. 10.

Difference between *Jivatma and Parmatma*—(i) Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-13.

Non-duality between the Jiva and Brahm has been proclaimed in the Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 2, 5.

The *size of the Jiva* has been given in the Krishna Yajur Veda's Shwetashwatar Upanishad, canto 5, verse no. 8 as follows—"The size and dimension of the Jiva (literally and generally referring to the living creature, but here implying to the 'true identity' of the creature as its pure consciousness known as the Atma and not the gross body which might be as colossus as the mammoth or an elephant, and as minute as the one-cell organisms as the bacteria and amoeba) is astonishingly miniscule and microscopic beyond imagination. It is as small as the fraction that remains after the tip of a hair follicle is split into one hundred parts and then one part of this (i.e. the one hundredth part) is further split into another hundred parts. [That is, the Atma is the size of one thousandth part of the tip of a hair follicle. The idea is not to actually measure its physical dimensions but to drive home the point that it is unimaginably minute like the atom.]

The miracle is that this single minute atomic entity expands itself into infinite variety of creatures, having as many variations in forms, shapes, sizes and colours as well as temperaments, inclinations, behavioral patterns and nature as there are number of species, classes and divisions of creation in this world (9)."

The eternal esoteric question *Who is a Jiva* (a living being) has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 3; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Saraswati Upanishad, verse nos. 47-48; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 15; Skand Upanishad, verse nos. 6-7. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2.

Though it is not possible here to quote all the above Upanishads to learn 'who a Jiva is', we shall however quote selected Upanishadic verses as follows to understand this concept better.

Now let us see what Paingal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 12 has to say on the subject of 'who is a Jiva'—"That all-knowing and omniscient Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation) invoked his own stupendous powers that created illusions and delusions in this creation, called his 'Maya', which allowed him to assume any form that he wished, and in conjunction with it (or joining hands with his own Maya, or allowing himself to become veiled in his own delusions) he entered the body of the individual creature. He was so enamoured with his own creation, and especially when he allowed his Maya to accompany him, that the same cosmic Lord who is beyond comprehension of even the wisest of men and the reach of the holy scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, became engulfed or surrounded by 'Moha' (worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments, endearments, longings, love and affections). With this twin fault—viz. Maya and Moha—that supreme Lord who has no attributes and names became a 'worldly creature'. [That is, when Maya found out that it's Lord is getting interested in and developing affection for what he has created, it went ahead to fulfill the wishes of its Lord like a faithful and obedient servant would. Maya went literally overboard to please the Lord, and knowing that he might balk and suffer from indecision as to whether or not to allow himself to plunge in the formidable web of creation that he plans to unfold (because Brahm was an enlightened Being, and he would soon realise his failings), Maya showed its sly hand and made him get infatuated and enamoured with the creation to such an extent that the Lord lost awareness of who is was, and consequently became engrossed in this world like a fish takes to water at the first opportunity. Say, if this can happen to the Ishwar whose Maya did not think twice in casting its evil spell upon its own Lord, how can an ordinary creature can ever expect to be free from its tentacles!]

Therefore, the supreme Ishwar, now manifested as a creature, the Jiva, began to treat himself as a doer of deeds and an enjoyer of or a sufferer from the consequences of those deeds because he became associated with the three types of bodies¹ that he had assumed in his form of a worldly creature.

When he got associated with the body having three divisions (gross, subtle and causal), he naturally lived through all the states through which these bodies pass during their sojourn in

this mortal world—such as the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state of existence. Further, since he had assumed all the characteristics of a creature's body, he assumed that he would die like an ordinary creature. Thus, the immortal Lord became mortal! [In other words, once Maya and Moha had their upper hands, the Lord of creation was misled to believe that he is an ordinary mortal being who has a mortal body, undergoes the three states of existence so characteristic of the body, that he would die, and that he would enjoy or suffer the results of his deeds.]

As a result he went round and round like the bullock turning the water-wheel or the potter's wheel which goes on endlessly turning; he got trapped in this wheel of a continuous cycle of birth and death (12).

[Note—¹The three types of bodies of a creature are the following—the gross body having the various sense organs, the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect, and the causal body consisting of the Atma surrounded by the bliss sheath.]

The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12 describes who is a Jiva as follows—"The 'Manas Brahm' (i.e. the Brahm that lives as the sub-conscious and the subtle mind of the creature, controlling the latter's thoughts and emotions from within) has a divine and sublime subtle form known as 'Hans', 'So-a-Ham', etc.

[This Manas Brahm obviously is the pure conscious Atma as the divine bird Hans, the Swan, is frequently used in the Upanishads as a metaphor for the Atma to indicate the latter's immaculacy, holiness, purity and divinity, along with a high degree of wisdom, enlightenment and erudition. Since the Atma is also the 'self' of the creature, a person who performs a fire sacrifice with a holistic approach is expected to become highly self-realised in as much as he declares, with the greatest of honesty and sincerity 'I am that Brahm' who is represented by Hans which is a metaphor for the Atma.]

This symbolic fire sacrifice (that is done to attain this eclectic state of existence when the aspirant becomes enough self-realised to understand that he is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified in the form of his Atma known as Hans) is actually the practice of Naad. When the seeker of Brahm becomes completely submerged in the thoughts of Brahm and the Atma, when he continuously meditates upon the pure consciousness by employing the Mantra 'Hans' (as described in a number of Upanishads for this purpose), his inner-self begins to resonate with the sound of Naad (i.e. the cosmic sound in ether which is said to be generated in the cosmos by the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm). This sound flows in a continuous stream like the flow of oil on a clean surface. Its vibrations reverberate in the nerves and veins of the practitioner's body so much so that he becomes oblivious of everything else in this world.

Any disruption in this state of transcendental existence of continuous bliss and stability is the state of existence known as the Jiva—i.e. the Atma that lacks steadiness of bliss and tranquility, and is therefore tossed and tumbled around by the changing nature of the gross world around it.

[In other words, the 'Jiva' or the living being is an entity that is different from Brahm by the virtue of its losing its connection with the Atma, the pure consciousness. Otherwise, there is no distinction between the Jiva and Brahm.] (12)."

The Tripadvibhuta Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-12 describe who a Jiva is as follows—

"Canto 4, paragraph no. 9 = During the period of Unmesh (i.e. when the external world is perceived employing the gross organs of perception in the gross body) the Avidya (lack of true knowledge; ignorance of the reality and truth) is the dominant feature. [From the spiritual perspective, the gross world that is seen to exist and the gross body which the creature thinks as his 'self' is out of total ignorance and false notions.]

On the contrary, during the Nimesh period this Avidya is totally dispensed with. [That is, when one turns inwards and contemplates upon the ‘truth’ of existence by shutting off all sources of delusions that are created by the outside world, it is akin to shutting-off of all ignorance. Then what is observed is free from being tainted by Avidya.]

As soon as Unmesh resurfaces (i.e. as soon as one opens the eye, or as soon as one begins to perceive the existence of the gross external world and starts to relate himself with it, or soon as he becomes extrovert), the factor of Avidya (lack of knowledge of the truth that has its genesis in ignorance) also stages a come-back because it is propelled to the front by the very subtle and hidden Vasanas that are present in the creature. [These Vasanas are his natural passions and desires to enjoy the material comforts and pleasures of the world and its sense objects, to gratify the body and its sense organs. They drive the creature towards the world of artificiality or the world of Avidya, and away from the Truth represented by the world of Vidya.]

As soon as this happens, all the accompanying paraphernalia of Avidya make a colourful and forceful resurgence. With this development there arises the concept of duality as a natural corollary, as a natural follow-up, and as a natural consequence. [That is, once one allows himself to be trapped by Avidya, the latter catches hold of the prey with a vengeance and viciously hold him in its vice-like grip. The creature becomes overwhelmed by delusions that propel him towards believing as true what is essentially untrue.]

Because of the mischief created by Avidya, or because of the lack of knowledge of the reality, there arises the concept of cause and its effect. The creature who is overcome with Avidya during the Unmesh phase of existence begins to see duality in the world—he begins to see or perceive a difference between the Jiva (the individual living creature) and the Ishwar (the Lord who appears to control this creature, who can punish and give reward, and to whom the creature offers his respects and worship).

The Ishwar is designated as being the cause of this creation, and the Jiva is the effect. The existence of this creation with all its units, including the living creature, is attributed to the Ishwar (the Supreme Being; the Brahm; the Adi-Narayan). The product that reveals the dynamism of this Ishwar, the effect of what Ishwar wished to do, is in the form of the Jiva, the living being (9).

“Canto 4, paragraph no. 11 = They (i.e. such people who do not honour Lord Vishnu and therefore are affected by Maya) continue to be trapped in the cycle of birth and re-birth repeatedly for an endless time, being impelled and motivated by the various components of the Antahakarans (the ‘inner self’ and its various Vasanas and Vrittis—the various natural inclinations, desires, yearnings, passions tendencies and habits etc. of a creature that traps him in the vicious cycle of birth and death and re-birth)¹.

This Antahakaran is the field of activity of Avidya. [That is, when true knowledge is lacking, the accompanying ignorance and related delusions directly affect the inner being of the creature, and through it, his whole thought process, temperament and life. It must be noted that mind and the intellect are important components of the Antahakaran, and it is the mind and the intellect that do the thinking and analysis for the creature. So when Avidya is the dominant player, its influence would be evident in all the spheres of life of the creature.]

At the same time it cannot be denied that the Antahakaran (the subtle inner-self) remains activated and empowered due to the presence of ‘consciousness’ inside the gross body of the creature. Since this ‘consciousness’ that keeps the creature alive and activates his Antahakaran is a reflection, an image, of the cosmic Consciousness which is synonymous with the divine entity known as Brahm, it follows that Brahm is the divine One who is reflected in the inner-self as well as the body of the creature. This ‘reflection’ or ‘image’ of the cosmic Consciousness is called the ‘Jiva’, the living being (11).

[Note—¹Anthakaran—This is the subtle body of the creature consisting of four components such as the mind (Mana), the intellect (Buddhi), the faculty of reasoning, thought, discrimination, understanding and the ability to pay attention and focus the mind and intellect on any subject

(Chitta), and the notion of ego, pride and vanity, and their attendant arrogance and haughtiness (Ahankar).

The word ‘Antahakaran’ literally means the ‘inner instrument’ of the creature by which his mind works and receives the world. The word has two components—viz. ‘Antaha’ meaning ‘inner’, and ‘Karan’ meaning ‘instrument that causes the mind to work’. The external organs of the body such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which are the organs of perception physically receive the inputs from the external world, but their actual functioning is due to this Antahakaran or the inner instrument of the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect complex because if the latter malfunctions the former are useless.]

“Canto 4, paragraph no. 12 = Some say that all the Jivas (living beings) have the characteristic attribute of possessing an ‘Antahakaran’. [That is, all living beings have a subtle component of the body known as the Antahakaran, which constitutes of the Mana (mind), the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankar (ego, pride) that determine the individual’s personality and qualities. See note to paragraph no. 11.]

Others assert that all the Jivas have the characteristic attribute of having a subtle body that lives in the gross body that is born from or created out the Maha-Bhuts, the great primary elements of creation¹.

Still some others say that the Jiva is the reflection of the Chaitanya (consciousness) in the Buddhi (intellect). [That is, the Consciousness that inspires the intellect and enables it to perceive, think, reflect, analyse, contemplate, deduce, decide and determine are the functions that make an entity distinguished from another that cannot perform these intelligent tasks. The entity that shows the above attributes is called a Jiva or a living being who is conscious, and that which doesn’t is not a Jiva. Therefore, a living being who is conscientious, wise, thoughtful, intelligent and mindful or ‘conscious’ of his responsibilities and moral duties would be called a ‘Jiva’ in the true sense of the word. The rest would be no more than life-less entities such as rocks, or unintelligent creatures such as plants and other lower forms of animal life.]

All these different forms of Jivas or the classification of living beings into different categories is based on the characteristic attributes that they possess or exhibit. But fundamentally there is no difference between them. [This is accordance with the theory of Advaita or non-duality that stresses that all forms of creation are basically the same because they are simply different forms of the same Brahman, the universal Truth. Since ‘Truth’ can be only one and not two, it follows that if the world is to have any meaning in it then it must conform to this basic fact about ‘Truth’—and it is that the ‘Truth’ will always remain one and not two. This at once shoots down the concept of ‘duality’ in creation! We can understand this eclectic phenomenon by a simple instance. Just like the same metal ‘gold’ is called by different names because of the different forms, shapes and sizes into which it is moulded to create various items of ornaments and decorative jewelry having myriad names and values though the primary ingredient is the same ‘gold’ in all of them, or just like the same element ‘earth’ is moulded by a potter into different forms and shapes with varying sizes and contours and given different names though the same element known as ‘earth’ is inherently present in all of them—similarly, all the Jivas or living beings are basically and inherently the same because they have the same universal ‘consciousness’ in them as the primary element that entitles them at all to be called a ‘Jiva’ in the first place. That is, notwithstanding the different definitions of Jiva according to various schools of thoughts and philosophy, the fundamental nature of a living being cannot be changed—and this is the fact that they are called a ‘living being’ because of the presence of ‘consciousness’ in them. Without its presence, no entity would be entitled to be called a ‘Jiva’ no matter how beautiful, important, intelligent or handsome he might be! For instance, the modern world’s computer is very intelligent and performs great calculations in a jiffy, and even helps one to predict the future and trace the past precisely based on intelligent interpretation of the data, tasks

that would take a normal man a very long time to do even if it is at all possible for him to do it. But would anyone in his right senses call a computer a 'Jiva' or 'a living being'?) (12).

[Note—¹The 5 Maha-Bhuts—They are also called the 'Panch Maha-Bhuts' are the five primary elements of creation. They are sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or all forms of liquids, and earth or all forms of solids. The Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes these elements in great detail along with their manifold influence on this creation, including the latter's very existence. The gross body of the creature is made up of these five elements in varying proportions. According to Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the ratio of these elements in this creation is the following—earth is one half, and the rest half consists of water, fire, sky and air elements in the ratio of one-eighth each.

Refer also to Jabal-darshan Upanishad, 8/5-6; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no.2; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178; Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition verse nos. 85-99.

The 12 Maha Bhuts—According to the Gayatri Upanishad of Atharva Veda's Gopath Brahman, Kandika no. 37, the twelve Mahabhuts are the following—Brahm (the Supreme Being), Akash (sky), Vayu (air or wind), Jyoti (light), Aapo (water), Bhumi (earth), Anna (food), Pran (life or the vital winds that sustain life), Mana (mind), Vaani (speech), Vedas, Yagya (fire sacrifice) = 12.

According to Kandika 38, they are the following—Veda, Vaani (speech), Mana (mind), Pran (life; vital winds), Anna (food), Bhumi (earth), Aapo (water), Tej (fire), Vayu (air or wind), Akash (sky), Brahm (the Supreme Being), Brahmin = 12.]

Goswami Tulsidas' epic narration of Lord Ram's story popularly known as the Ram Charit Manas (the 'Ramayana') describes who a Jiva is in its Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 117 as follows—

चौ०. सुनुहु तात यह अकथ कहानी । समुझत बनइ न जाइ बखानी ॥ १ ॥
 ईस्वर अंस जीव अबिनासी । चेतन अमल सहज सुख रासी ॥ २ ॥
 सो मायाबस भयउ गोसाई । बँध्यो कीर मरकट की नाई ॥ ३ ॥
 जड़ चेतनहि ग्रंथि परि गई । जदपि मृषा छूटत कठिनई ॥ ४ ॥
 तब ते जीव भयउ संसारी । छूट न ग्रंथि न होइ सुखारी ॥ ५ ॥
 श्रुति पुरान बहु कहेउ उपाई । छूट न अधिक अधिक अरुझाई ॥ ६ ॥
 जीव हृदयँ तम मोह बिसेषी । ग्रंथि छूट किमि परइ न देखी ॥ ७ ॥
 अस संजोग ईस जब करई । तबहुँ कदाचित सो निरुअरई ॥ ८ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu tāta yaha akatha kahānī. samujhata bana'i na jā'i bakhānī. 1.
 īsvara ansa jīva abināsī. cētana amala sahaja sukha rāsī. 2.
 sō māyābasa bhaya'u gōsā'īm. bam'dhyō kīra marakaṭa kī nā'īm. 3.
 jara cētanahi granthi pari ga'ī. jadapi mṛṣā chūṭata kaṭhina'ī. 4.
 taba tē jīva bhaya'u sansārī. chūṭa na granthi na hō'i sukhārī. 5.
 śruti purāna bahu kahē'u upā'ī. chūṭa na adhika adhika arujhā'ī. 6.
 jīva hṛdayam tama mōha bisēṣī. granthi chūṭa kimi para'i na dēkhī. 7.

asa sanjōga īsa jaba kara'ī. tabahum' kadācita sō niru'ara'ī. 8.

Sage Kaagbhusund told Garud (the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu; the 'Eagle'), the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu who had approached the former to dispel his ignorance on spiritual subjects—"Listen dear to this story that cannot be described in full, but it can be understood with a little bit of wisdom. It tells us in essence the true nature of a Jiva, the living being, the creature who becomes trapped in this world and separated from the Supreme Being.

The Jiva is a fraction (or an image, a representative) of the Iswar, the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma. Hence, the Jiva is also imperishable, consciousness personified, pure, uncorrupt and immaculate in its truthful form, and an abode of bliss and happiness. (Chaupai line nos. 1-2).

This Jiva, in its stupid ignorance and greed, allowed itself to get trapped due to Maya (delusions), and out of its own free will allowed its self to be caught like a monkey and a bird which get caught due to their greed. (3)

In this way, that which was basically subtle and sublime consciousness became tied down in knots something that is gross, dull and inane. Though this knot is artificial and self-created, and based on delusions, yet it is hard to break and discard. (4)

It is ever since this happened (i.e. since the creature became trapped in the web of delusions and began to think its self as separate from the Parmatma) that the Jiva became an entity that related to this world (which itself is gross and artificial), and therefore subjected to birth and death (inspite of its origin in an entity that is imperishable and eternal). Now as it happens, the Jiva cannot get rid of the knot that ties him to this world, and therefore he cannot get rid of the misery attendant to it and become happy (i.e. he remains wallowing in pain, misery and grief for endless period of time). (5)

Though the scriptures (Vedas and Purans) have prescribed a number of ways to free from this knot, but to implement them is difficult, and so the cycle of misery not only continues unabated but this tying knot gets sturdier and stronger with the passage of time. (6).

There is darkness of ignorance in the heart of the Jiva, and therefore he cannot see the knot in the first place. So how can he try to unknot it? (7)

It is only when the Lord God provides some good chance that this opportunity (to break free from the knot of delusions and ignorance) can be availed of. (8)"]

चौ०. थोरेहि महँ सब कहउँ बुझाई । सुनहु तात मति मन चित लाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

thōrēhi maham' saba kaha'um' bujhā'ī. sunahu tāta mati mana cita lā'ī. 1.

Lord Ram answered—"Dear, I shall explain these things to you in brief. Listen carefully with due attention; focus your mind and sub-conscious to what is being said, and don't get distracted (so that you can properly and judiciously understand the secret being revealed to you without any confusion, and remember it with the correct perspective). (1)

[Note—The instruments employed to listen, analyse, understand and remember anything that is being taught by a teacher, are the mind (Mana), the intellect (Buddhi) and the sub-conscious (Chitta). If any one of them is distracted, the knowledge becomes distorted proportionately. A person's depth and width of knowledge, his erudition and sagacity, his level of wisdom and enlightenment are all commensurate with the sharpness, the alertness, the competence, the ability, the willingness and the agility of all these three instruments playing in harmony.

The *mind* acts as the general receptacle as it controls the organs of perception, such as the ear with which one listens, and the other organs of the body which can create disturbance or

distraction if not properly controlled by the mind. The *intellect* helps to analyse and understand the general body of the input information, and make it tangible, logical, comprehensible and usable for the man by encoding the input information in an intelligent manner so that an equally intelligible output is produced. The *sub-conscious* registers this information for future retrieval and reference. It is the back-room office of the living being, determining how he acts and reacts to a given situation depending upon the feedback this sub-conscious gives him.

A wise man's Chitta or sub-conscious will be focused on the Truth, and therefore all his reasoning, his decisions, his behavioral patterns, his advice etc would be moulded according to this background of Truth. But the information that the Chitta stores is determined by the Buddhi, the intellect. So, if the Buddhi is corrupt then the quality of information stored by the Chitta would also be corrupt. To understand anything properly, full concentration of mind is needed, and this can only happen when the sense organs of the body are properly tamed. This is what Lord Ram means here—he has asked Laxman to pay proper attention to what the Lord is about to preach him, because the knowledge that the Lord is about to impart have a profound bearing on the spiritual welfare and enlightenment of a creature, the primary motive of Laxman which made him approach the Lord with his queries.]

मैं अरु मोर तोर तैं माया । जेहिं बस कीन्हे जीव निकाया ॥ २ ॥

गो गोचर जहँ लगि मन जाई । सो सब माया जानेहु भाई ॥ ३ ॥

mair̥m aru mōra tōra tair̥m māyā. jēhirm basa kīnhē jīva nikāyā. 2.

gō gōcara jaham̐ lagi mana jā'ī. sō saba māyā jānēhu bhā'ī. 3.

The erroneous concept of 'me or I and mine, you and yours' is the essential cause of all sorts of Maya that has enslaved all the Jivas (living beings) by its vicious grip, it has ensnared all living beings in its vice-like shackle. This concept has all the living beings under its control. (2)

[The truth is that the entity which calls itself a Jiva or a living being fails to understand what its real identity is. It fails to understand and realise that the external form of the gross body that the world recognizes as the 'Jiva' is not the living being's truthful identity at all. The real Jiva is the Atma, the soul which is pure consciousness that lives inside this gross body. The Atma is the truthful identity of all living beings. It is a divine, holy, subtle and sublime entity, absolutely different and separate from the physical gross body. The Atma is a universal entity, not limited to any specific body; it lives inside the bodies of all living beings.

Hence, the idea that one person is Mr. A and the other is Mr. B holds no water in the spiritual plane—because the same Atma lives in both their bodies. It follows therefore that fundamentally there is no such thing as 'me' and 'you'. Since this is the great metaphysical truth of existence, there exists no reason why something belongs to 'me' and not to 'you'. This concept of 'you' and 'me' arises out of the erroneous belief that the gross body is the person's truthful self and identity. Once this mistaken belief is removed, the concept of duality automatically vanishes from sight.

The notion of a particular thing being 'mine' creates an attachment to it; it makes a man worry about its safety and protection; it makes a man obsessive and possessive. He fears that the other person, the 'you', would snatch it from him at the first opportunity, so his whole time, energy and being are spent on worrying about and protecting his possessions. The lure of physical gratification that all material things provide to a creature's sense organs is so strong and irresistibly great that a creature would never be satisfied with whatever he has; the urge to acquire more and still more overpowers him so much so that he goes to any length to fulfill this desire. This in turn sets off a chain reaction of wants and more wants, coupled with the need to protect

the ever increasing possessions and safeguard them from the prying eyes of jealousy that sprouts in the heart of others who are equally ignorant and deluded like this creature himself.

On the contrary, if the creature, the Jiva or the living being, is self-realised, enlightened and wise he will understand that the body is a perishable entity, and therefore there is no sense in pampering something that would one day betray the ‘true self’, the Atma. Similarly, the gross material world which relates to this gross body is also useless to pursue as one would be forced to abandon it once the body is abandoned. The real ‘self’ known as the Atma has nothing to do with either of them—the body or the world.]

Maya (delusions) is the creation of the imaginative and fertile mind (Mana). Therefore, all the objects of perception of the sense organs in this world, and as far afield as the mind can go to imagine things and their existence in this mortal world—should all be regarded as being a form of Maya. They all represent Maya.

[In other words, the whole world and its countless entanglements are entrapping, deluding and misleading for the soul of the creature. If the creature is not careful then he will fall in their trap and tempted by their illusionary charm much like a thirst man running behind a mirage in a desert in the hope of finding water to quench his thirst.] (3)

तेहि कर भेद सुनहु तुम्ह सोऊ । बिद्या अपर अबिद्या दोऊ ॥ ४ ॥

tēhi kara bhēda sunahu tumha sō'ū. bidyā apara abidyā dō'ū. 4.

Now, this Maya has two divisions—one is known as ‘Vidya’ and the other as ‘A-vidya’. Vidya is a superior entity and it is beyond description. Avidya has two forms (which will be described in the next lines). (4)

[Note—Primarily, the word ‘Vidya’ means knowledge, and its opposite is ‘A-vidya’ or lack of knowledge. Here, ‘knowledge’ would mean spiritual knowledge of the Absolute Truth and Reality of existence. This Vidya is highly esoteric and enigmatic. Since it is directly related to the concept of cosmic Consciousness that is divine and a fount of all knowledge, it is not possible to know it by other means or compare it with some other standard. It is the supreme standard of knowledge as it is related to the ‘Absolute Truth and Reality’ and not mere ‘truth’ that may be half-truth. The Absolute Truth that the Vidya refers to it is eternal, infinite, steady and sublime. Its knowledge is enlightening and obtained by meditation and contemplation. It is ‘self realised’ knowledge which cannot be bound and butted in language. The acquisition of Vidya leads to attainment of supreme bliss, beatitude and felicity.

Avidya on the other hand has just the opposite meaning; it simply means ‘non-vidya’ or lack of truthful knowledge of the ultimate Reality and the Truth. Naturally if Vidya is enlightening, Avidya would have just the opposite affect—it would have darkness in varying degrees. Whereas Vidya lifts the soul upwards because it is sublime by its inherent nature, Avidya pulls the soul downwards because it is gross by its inherent nature.

The two divisions of Avidya will be discussed in Chaupai line nos. 5-6.

Let us briefly see what ‘Vidya’ and ‘A-vidya’ refer to in the eyes of the Upanishads. The word *Avidya* broadly means lack of true and correct knowledge of anything; it refers to being ignorant about the reality behind the misleading façade. Such persons are unwise, foolish and unaware of the actual truth. They are those people who think, inter alia, that their body is their true identity, that they are the ones doing deeds with their bodies and therefore are entitled to enjoy the fruits of those deeds and also have to suffer the bad effects of those deeds, that there is

something known as the Atma which is their true self and that it has nothing to do with either the body or what it does, that the same Atma resides in all other creatures in the world, that the world is a visible display of the stupendous maverick tricks that the supreme Lord can play, that the deeds should be treated as an offering to that Lord and a service to him, that the alluring world with all its charms is but an imagination of the mind and is as illusionary as the mirage in a desert or the ghost seen in the night, that therefore the pursuance of the world is not the aim of life and not worth the effort, and so on and so forth. Such persons become surrounded by a veil called 'ignorance of the reality and truth'. They become deluded and start hallucinating like a man under a spell.

The irony is that even those who have had the fortune of studying the scriptures and are considered well versed and expert in them, are worse off if they do not understand and implement the doctrines and maxims of the scriptures in their true spirit. It is futile to study the scriptures if their intent and purpose is not grasped, and it is spiritual upliftment and attaining liberation and deliverance from the trap of delusions and ignorance in which a person has fallen. Merely recitation of the hymns endlessly, engaging in detailed religious rituals and completing them flawlessly to the dot, entering in endless debates in order to establish one's scholarship and erudition is nothing more than waste of life and energy. The real goal of knowledge is to inculcate spiritualism and provide emancipation and salvation, give eternal peace and tranquility, bliss and happiness, induce good virtues and make one beneficial for the society. If that purpose is not achieved, then such persons may get fame, fortune and honour, but spiritually they would be regarded as having fallen in a darker well because in an ignorant man commits an inadvertent error, he can be excused, but if the same error is committed by an expert, it is unforgivable. After all, what is the purpose of studying and acquiring knowledge if a man still commits the same mistake as his illiterate brother!

One should not be confused by what is implied here. It does not imply that a man should not study or acquire knowledge. The intention here is to make it clear that if the knowledge is superficial and just acquired with worldly aim of acquiring fame, name, honour and wealth, then it will be denigrating, decapitating and demeaning for the exalted 'soul' of the creature and act as a deterrent for the spiritual upliftment of the individual. It would bog him down with worldly allurements that are very enticing on the surface but hollow and worthless from the inside. A person will be better off being ignorant and stupid because at least he would be humble and meek instead of being proud, haughty and arrogant about his misplaced knowledge.

What is *Avidya* and what constitutes *Vidya* have been explained in the Atharva Veda's Mahavakya Upanishad, in its verse nos. 4-5.

The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 17-18 deal with the concept of what constitutes *Vidya*, and what is its opposite known as A-*Vidya* in the context of the Atma.

The Sarwasaro-panishad, verse no. 3 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes both *Avidya* as well as its opposite *Vidya* in the following terms—"Verse no. 3—The misconception about the true nature of the 'self', called the Atma of the creature, as being the 'gross and perishable body' instead of its immaculate, pure conscious, eternal and imperishable form which remains totally detached, distinct and separate from the body, and the resultant sense of ego and pride as well as attachments and attractions pertaining to the body and the deeds done by this body that this misconception generates in its wake, is due to lack of truthful and holistic knowledge about the Atma's fundamental and essential form as the ethereal, sublime, divine and holy entity which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. This ignorance about the reality, this misconception about the Atma vis-à-vis the body and the world, this deluding idea that the 'self' is the gross perishable body and not an independent exalted entity which is eternal and imperishable as well as completely different from the body and has nothing to do with anything related with the grossness of the body, is called '*Avidya*'.

On the contrary, that means by which this ignorance about the truth is dispelled, that which removes all sense of ego and a sense of false pride that the creature has developed about the body and its abilities and powers, its strengths and potentials, its beauty and charm etc. is called ‘Vidya’ or truthful knowledge (3).”

The Ishavasya Upanishad, verse no. 9 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition explains the concept of Avidya as follows—“Those persons who worship Avidya fall in a dark pit or a blind well like a blind man. They become shrouded in a veil of darkness symbolising ignorance of reality and ignorance induced delusions, leading to hallucinations like a man seeing imaginary things in darkness of the night.

Meanwhile, the irony is that those who worship Vidya (which is the opposite of being ignorant and illiterate), are deemed to be sagacious, learned, erudite, scholarly and skilled in what is regarded as ‘knowledge’ (i.e. are well read in the scriptures and considered scholarly amongst men), too fall in a dark pit, but the pit is darker and more grave and dense than the one in which their ignorant brethren had fallen. This darkness engulfs them from all sides and firmly clasps them in its vice like grip. [9]”

The concept of ‘Avidya’ has been explained in the Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4, and Canto 5, verse no. 19 as follows—

“Canto 4, verse no. 4 = To think that this world consists of so many material things that have a real existence, to belief these material things and the world of sense objects to be true is known as ‘Avidya’—lack of true knowledge and dominance of ignorance.

All the things of the world consisting of material sense objects are the subject matter of Avidya. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 19.]

[That is, when one is ignorant of the fact that the world is of a gross and artificial nature, and that it is entrapping as well as deluding for the Atma, he would pay attention to the material things of the mundane gross world; he would think of these things as having any kind of real value and importance which is worth paying attention to. It is ‘Avidya’ because such knowledge is not based on facts as the world and its material sense objects are un-truths; they are imaginary and deluding. They are like the mirage seen in a hot desert—appearing to be so alluring and real, but having no substance in it.]

Hence, a person who is known as ‘Maha Yogi’—i.e. a great ascetic who is very wise and enlightened, who is well acquainted about the ‘truth’ of the Atma, abandons such fallacious and deluding notions (as outlined above) (4).

“Canto 5, verse no. 19 = ‘It is not Brahm (the supreme transcendental Consciousness and the Absolute Truth)’—to think of anything or anybody in this term is known as ‘A-Vidya’ or ignorance. [This is because everything in existence is one or the other form of the same Brahm. Brahm is a universal truthful entity that is all-pervading and constant in the entire creation.]

Hence, overcoming A-Vidya or ignorance is to be firmly convinced that all is Brahm personified, and there is nothing that is not Brahm (19).”]

एक दुष्ट अतिसय दुखरूपा । जा बस जीव परा भवकूपा ॥ ५ ॥

ēka duṣṭa atisaya dukharūpā. jā basa jīva parā bhavakūpā. 5.

One of the aspects of Avidya (ignorance) is very wicked as well as the cause and harbinger of endless sorrows, grief, pain and torments for the creature. If the creature is overcome by it or if it is able to trap the creature in its vicious grip, he (the creature) falls in a blind and dark well represented by this mundane and mortal world. (5)

[Note—This first aspect of Avidya is called the ‘Aavaran Shakti’. The word Aavaran means to cover in a veil, to sheath, to envelop, to wrap in a sheet, distortions, pretension, deception, deceit

and something that does not allow the original thing to be seen by covering it with a thin veil that distorts its originality; a veil of ignorance about one's true nature, identity and essential form that cloaks the Atma/soul which is pure consciousness and the true self. Hence, the word 'Aavaran' literally means a covering, shield, band, girdle, protective ring or sheath that encloses the deity from all sides.

The Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 47-49, 52-54, 56-57 describe what Maya actually is, how it creates this world and hides the 'truth' known as 'super Consciousness', and goes on to describe the two important types of Shaktis or dynamic powers of Maya—one called the 'Vikshep Shakti' and the other called the 'Aavaran Shakti'. To quote—

"Verse no. 47 = The Prakriti (Nature) was created or produced by a combination of the three primary qualifications called Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas. [These are the basic qualities that determine the nature and temperament of all creatures. All living beings have them in varying proportions. The Sata is the best and most auspicious quality that makes a man spiritually inclined. The Raja makes him tend to veer towards the tendency to move towards the world with the intentions to expand and acquire fame and name. The Tama is the meanest of the three qualities which make a man mean and of a low mentality. The personality and character of any man is decided by the ratio of these three basic qualities.]

Just like an image forming in a mirror appears to be very true, life-like and almost identical to the object of which it is a reflection (if one is unaware that what one sees in this mirror is merely an image and not the real thing), the reflection of the consciousness in the mirror of Nature appears to be identical to the original cosmic Consciousness. [The nature of a man is already said to be tainted by the three Gunas as stated above. When the consciousness is seen through this veil, it is obvious that these three Gunas would cast their affect on the real form and nature of the consciousness and it would be tainted by them. So though the primary consciousness is pristine pure, incorrupt and immaculate, its version as seen in living creatures appears to be tainted due to presence of the various Gunas that are invariably present in all living creatures as their inherent character and nature. See verse no. 48 below.] (47).

"Verse no. 48 = Since the Prakriti (Nature) consists of three Gunas, when the pure consciousness is reflected in it, the result is that the Prakriti appears to depict three versions of the same consciousness, or Prakriti begins to glow or shine with three different hues that correspond to the three basic Gunas (called Sata, Raja and Tama) that this Prakriti has as its integral part. [The Prakriti has no shine of its own but it is the consciousness that is present in a creature that makes it alive and showcase its characters much like the case of a lantern's glass chimney of a particular colour which glows and shows its colour only when the wick of the lantern is lighted inside it. The light of the lantern here is the consciousness, the coloured chimney is the Prakriti of the creature, and the lantern is the creature himself.]

You, i.e. your pure quintessential 'self' as the pure consciousness, become a Jiva (a mortal living being having a gross body and depicting a set of characteristics or attributes) because of being separated or torn away from your quintessential true form known as the Consciousness (which is always immaculate, incorrupt and pure) due to this distorted view of your 'self' when the latter is seen through the prism of the tainted Prakriti. [The pure quintessential 'self' is consciousness personified. It is marked by being eternal, immaculate and taintless. On the other hand the Jiva is mortal, perishable and tainted with numerous shortcomings. This happens because the creature sees the consciousness through the looking glass of his inherent nature which is already tainted by the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama. These three Gunas do not allow anyone to see the consciousness in its true form. To do so, one would have to rise above the mundane and develop proper insight just like a microscope is needed to see things that are too small to be seen by the naked eye.] (48).

“Verse no. 49 = Prakriti (Nature) in which the dominant Guna or quality is pure Sata is called the ‘Maya that is predominantly auspicious’.

The pure consciousness that is reflected in this Maya (Prakriti or Nature) which is dominated by the Sata Guna is known as ‘Aja’ or the creator Brahma. [And this is why Brahma is regarded as being predominantly wise, learned and enlightened about spiritual and metaphysical matters inspite of the fact that he is neck deep in the process of creation, and is enchanted so much by his own creation and its astounding beauty that he remains perpetually enthralled and so completely enamoured by it that he appears, for all practical purposes, to be deeply engrossed in this perishable and finite world inspite of being the creator of the Vedas and their Upanishads that are the epitome of knowledge and wisdom regarding spiritualism.] (49).

“Verse no. 52 = In this way, the pure cosmic Consciousness possessing all the eclectic and divine virtues and supernatural powers, such as being Sarvagya (omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise) etc. *is called ‘Ishwar’*¹.

Maya has two Shaktis (dynamic powers or forces) that are employed by this Ishwar (pure consciousness) to implement its will. These are—(a) Vikshep Shakti meaning ‘deflection, dissipation, confusion, perplexity, obstruction, disturbance, scattering or tossing about in uncertainty and disarray, agitation of mind and spirit, fickleness, fragmentation, fission and disharmony etc.’, and (b) Aavaran Shakti meaning ‘to cover in a veil, to sheath, to envelop, to wrap in a sheet, distortions, pretension, deception, deceit and something that does not allow the original thing to be seen by covering it with a thin veil that distorts its originality; a veil of ignorance about one’s true nature, identity and essential form that cloaks the Atma/soul which is pure consciousness and the true self’ (52).

[Note--¹Ishwar is honoured by epithets which highlight some or the other of his majestic glories. Some of them, inter alia, are the following—Satya (truth), Shiva (auspicious), Sundar (beauty); Satt (eternal), Chitt (consciousness; knowledge), Anand (beatitude and felicity); Akchar (imperishable; the eternal ethereal word), Uttam (the best, the most exalted, the ultimate), Purush (the primary Male Spirit; the supreme Spirit), Parmatma (the supreme Soul of creation), Prakriti (primary Nature), Purshottam (the best Purush; the most exalted holy spirit), Pragya (knowledgeable, wise, skilled, enlightened and conscious) and Vibho (omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent).]

“Verse no. 53 = The first forceful power of Maya called Vikshep Shakti is responsible for creation of the entire world, right from the gross body of the individual creature at the micro level of creation to the vast universe at the macro level of creation.

The second forceful power of Maya called Aavaran Shakti is responsible creating a distinction between the ‘seer’ (i.e. the pure conscious ‘self’ or the Atma) and the ‘things or objects that are seen’ by this seer at the micro level of creation, and between ‘Brahm’ (the all-pervading seer or cosmic Consciousness) and ‘Srishti’ (the manifested creation springing forth from this Brahm and the latter’s visible revelation) at the macro level of creation. This Aavaran Shakti covers the truthfulness of ‘consciousness’ and makes it tainted (53).

[Note—The delusions created by Maya casts a veil around the truth so much so that the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true identity of the creature, is unable to see the ‘absolute truth and reality’ behind what is seen externally in the physical world. It forgets in its ignorance created by this veil of Maya that actually the external world has derived the importance and worth because of the presence of conscious life in the form of Atma in it, and the exterior façade is merely a covering that sheaths this Atma. Shorn of the Atma, the world would be as good as a dead body—say, who would like to fall in love with a dead body? A living being is dear one moment till he is alive and useful, and as soon as he is dead, he becomes useless and is disposed of immediately at the other moment. The basic unit that lends life, substance and value to everything in existence is the quintessential factor of universal consciousness that is a non-dual entity. That is, the

consciousness in the creature known as the ‘seer’ and the other creature who is ‘seen’ is the same. This is the climax of enlightenment, and the absence of it is due to the covering of Aavaran which eclipses or distorts this wisdom and enlightenment. The tainted Aavaran of Maya prevents one to come to know the truth and reality, and it is the cause of all delusions that create a sense of duality and separation between things that are inherently one, immutable and inseparable. This delusion creates an impression of one entity being the ‘self’ and the second entity being the ‘other person’. It is the cause of all strife, all bad blood, disharmony, animosity, jealousy, malice and hatred in this world; it is the prime cause of all dichotomy, confusions, perplexities and doubts.]

“Verse no. 54 = This (Maya) is the root cause of all worldly fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial material world of delusions. Under the influence of Maya, the Sakshi—the true ‘self’ of the creature, the pure conscious Atma that is supposed to remain a neutral witness to the happenings in the gross physical external world without actually getting involved in it—begins to see and recognise the external world that exists in the front of its eyes with its gross physical properties and outer characteristic features by employing the gross eyes of the body.

That is, the gross features of the external world are seen and believed to be the true and real form of the world under the deluding influence of Maya. In other words, the ‘Ling Deha’ (gross body) of the creation is perceived as the real world instead of the pure consciousness and the ‘truth’ that pervades through out in it in a most subtle and hidden form (54).

[Since the world is beheld by the ‘self’ through the tainted veil of Maya which has already influenced the mind-intellect complex through which external inputs and information are received and interpreted, the creature (i.e. the Sakshi) sees only a distorted version of the world. That is, the creature is able to see only the external features of the gross world outside. This external façade is so life-like and magical that the creature believes it to be true and real. Maya prevents the ‘self’ from seeing the truth; Maya prevents the creature from realising the fact that this physical gross world is unreal and untruth and simply like a mirage of the desert—unsustainable, transient, non-attainable, illusionary and deluding. The creature is not able to perceive the concealed ‘truth’ of life behind this façade, the ‘truth’ called the Atma or consciousness representing the cosmic Absolute without which this external gross body would be of no good. This is the magical theatrical performance of the maverick Maya that it produces a scenario that is so life-like and charming that a deluded creature who was supposed to remain a ‘Sakshi’ or a neutral witness to the external world is swept off his feet and gets neck-deeply involved in it.

Under the tainting influence of Maya, the creature is not able to see the hidden ‘real and absolute Truth’ and instead begins to believe in the ‘apparent truth’ which is more like the water of a mirage than the water of a river or lake. Refer also to note of verse no. 49.

In other words, the ‘Sakshi’, i.e. the true ‘self’ of the creature—who is supposed to be neutral and just mutely watch the magical creation of Maya unfold in the form of this physical world which is unreal, transient and perishable without actually getting involved in it (much like a spectator watching a magic show—forgets this basic principle and is so charmed by the scene watched that he gets swept off his feet and plunges head on into this world and its activities.

The net result of the influence of Maya is that the Sakshi gets neck-deep involved in something with which it should not have been involved at all—i.e. the ‘self’ of the creature should have remained neutral towards the material objects of the world and getting involved in them, should have seen the underlying ‘truth’ in the world and not be swept off by its external charms, but unfortunately this does not happen. Under the delusory effects of Maya, this Sakshi believes that what he sees in the outside world of sense objects is the truth and reality, and therefore it is worth pursuing and obtaining. The Sakshi allows himself to be voluntarily trapped like a bird willingly getting caught in a bird-catcher’s net. These facts are affirmed in verse no. 55 below.

The fact is that the world is artificial and an imaginary creation of the mind and its sub-conscious (refer Yogshika Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-61, 70), and the Atma—which is eternally wised and enlightened—is supposed to be aware of this fact and treat the artificial world as such. But unfortunately it doesn't. This is because the Atma, which is supposed to be a mere 'Sakshi' (mute, dispassionate, neutral and non-involved witness) gets deluded or misled by the veil of ignorance cast around it by Maya. Treating itself as part of the world, the Sakshi gets involved in the activities of the world. Having exceeded its brief, the Sakshi is bound to suffer from its excesses and get tied in shackles represented by various misconceptions about the reality and truth. The Sakshi remains involved in doing deeds and hopes that he would get peace and comfort from this world. This world is like a whirlpool in an ocean, it sucks the Sakshi deeper in its vortex and it remains ever trapped in the cycle of birth and death, bobbing up and down in this vast endless ocean represented by this world. After a very long time and many births, the Sakshi realises its follies and decides that enough is enough; it now endeavours to find out a way that would finally ensure that liberation and deliverance is obtained by it at any cost, and that it would not do anything which would force it into being subjugated by Maya and recycled into the bin of birth and death once again. It then researches on the method to achieve this end, and studies the scriptures and consults wise men. It discovers that the basic cause of the entire edifice getting erected is Maya and its delusory effects. It also realises that the 'self' does nothing, and that everything is done by the 'non-self', i.e. the gross body. So, it abhors Maya and delusions created by it, deciding not to get involved in the world. Consequently, when the past baggage of deeds and their consequences are exhausted and newer ones do not accumulate, the Sakshi finally gets its treasured liberation and deliverance.]

“Verse no. 56-57 = When the covering veil of Maya is removed, the creature is clearly able to see the error and the difference between what is the ‘actual truth’ and the ‘apparent truth’. Then the consciousness stops to have any kind of attractions for the gross material world with which it was so enamoured till now. [In the instance of the lantern cited in note of verse no. 49 above, when the tinted glass of the chimney is removed and replaced with transparent colourless glass, one can see the real colour of the flame along with the true colour of the objects that are seen with its light.]

Hence, the notion of the existence of a ‘Jiva’ (living being) who is separate from the ‘true self’ or the ‘conscious Atma’ vanishes. In other words, he begins to see the same Brahm everywhere, both inside his own self as the conscious Atma at the micro level of creation as well as the cosmic Consciousness that pervades everywhere in the external world at the macro level of creation. [That is, the enlightened creature henceforth begins to identify his ‘self’ with the sublime and subtle consciousness that is invisible, instead of with the gross body that is physically seen in this world. Similarly, he sees no difference between any two living beings because the same conscious Atma lives in both of them.]

He also realises the truth of the fact that the primarily immaculate and untainted divine entity known as Brahm had appeared to be dual in the form of the Supreme Being and the Jiva or the Supreme Being and the manifested world. When the veil of delusions and ignorance is removed, the dichotomy between Brahm and this world is eliminated, and uniformity and non-duality between Brahm and the rest of the creation becomes evident. [That is, he realises that the visible world is nothing but the same immutable, indivisible and non-dual Brahm revealed in these myriad and multifarious forms in which this vast and endless creation exists so much so that no two units in it are identical.] (56-57).”

This sort of ignorance acts to cover the mind and intellect of the creature and makes him forget his true form which is pure consciousness known as the Atma. Such a creature lies in a grave pit of delusions, thinking that the gross body is its true self, that the world is the reality. He remains engrossed in fulfilling the desires of his gross sense organs and is heavily burdened by the

erroneous notion of this thing being mine and that being yours. His mind and intellect has been conditioned by the belief in duality, and hence he is always tussling between the falsehood and the truth, swinging wildly from one end to another like a pendulum. He is sucked in the vortex of endless desires and pursuit of happiness that runs away from him the more closer he attempts to get to them. Say, how one can ever expect to find rest and peace in this condition.

This sort of Avidya is also known as 'Maya' that creates the notion of 'me and you' or 'mine and yours'. The entire visible world, as well as the world which is not visible is veiled in this covering of Avidya. This is explained when an ignorant creature yearns for things of the world that are visible, things which he thinks will give him comfort, pleasure, happiness, peace and bliss, as well as those things that are not directly visible but he imagines that their acquisition will give him the same benefit as that obtained from visible world. Then he thinks in his erroneous belief that such benefits are steady and permanent. He forgets that the world itself is transient, impermanent, perishable and mortal, and therefore there is no question of anything related to such a world being permanent and steady. Refer Chaupai line nos. 2-3 above.

In other words, if a person allows himself to be caught by the Avidya, then the latter pulls him down in a dark world characterized by an endless chain of multifarious problems and spiritual horrors. Since this world revolves around the theory of Karma or doing of deeds, the creature gets sucked in its vortex, doing so many deeds in order to survive and live in this world. But their consequences are grave—because doing of deeds makes a person involved in them, and this in turn leaves him spell-bound in the countless problems associated with the deed and the surrounding world where the deed is done. Then there is the perennial problem of not getting the desired result of efforts, motivating the person to strive more and more to achieve his objectives. Even when they are achieved, his cravings go on increasing tangentially so much so that his entire life is sucked in the whirlpool of this world. The deeds and actions along with their results is a fathomless ocean where one can go on and on without finding an end.

Another problem is attachment to the sense objects of the world as they are extremely tempting for the gross organs of perception and action of the creature's body which hanker for self-gratification. The creature is so overwhelmed by these and other such countless problems that he has little time left for contemplation and meditation or researching the 'truth and reality' of life. He goes stepping from one day to another in the hope of finding rest and peace which elude him like the water in a mirage. He finds himself trapped inside a dark and bottomless pit, the well-like world, from which he finds it impossible to extricate himself.

Among the many horrors related to this world referred to in this line are the constant fear of death and the body getting old and infirm. These fears arise out of the ignorance that the body is true identity of the person, whereas the fact is that it is merely a habitat for the Atma which indeed is the truthful 'self'. This Atma is eternal and non-perishable; it never decays or gets old. When the body becomes old and decrepit the Atma simply leaves it and enters another body. The Atma leaves the old body and lands to reside in a new body like a caterpillar leaving one leaf and alighting on a new leaf. The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 4/4/3 describes how the Atma leaves the old body at the time of death and enters a new body just like a caterpillar leaving an old leaf or twig and alighting on a new one. It reaches the end of the old leaf or twig, contracts its body, lifts its upper part, expands the body to get hold of the tip of the new leaf or twig, and then withdraws its body from the old habitat completely to make the new one its abode.

Avidya is also synonymous with 'darkness' that comes with the absence of enlightening light of understanding, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge. Even as a man walking in pitch dark is prone to grope and grapple to find his way, hurting himself in the process, stumbling and falling over frequently, may even fall in a pit or step in some filthy slush, and would miss his target with a wide angle as compared to man whose path is lit by a brilliant source of light and who knows what he does, where he is headed to, what are his goals in life etc., the dominance of Avidya acts as an all-powerful shackle for the creature that ties him down to the dark well representing this world.]

एक रचइ जग गुन बस जाकें । प्रभु प्रेरित नहिं निज बल ताकें ॥ ६ ॥
 ēka raca'i jaga guna basa jākēm. prabhu prērita nahim nija bala tākēm. 6.

The other aspect of this Avidya is the one that creates this world. The three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) are controlled by it, and it uses them to create this world. This aspect of Avidya (having the three Gunas which it employs to create the world which in turn is also governed by these three Gunas) is controlled by the Supreme Lord. It has no strength of its own; it does not do anything of its own but depends upon the directives of the Lord to act according to his will and to fulfill his wishes. (6)

[Note—There are three fundamental Gunas or qualities that give shape to all imaginable forms of characters in this creation and also determine how the world behaves and thinks. According to the Upanishads, the supreme Brahm had used them to mould this creation. The supreme Creator had used his creative powers known as ‘Maya Shakti’, the dynamic cosmic powers of creation that resulted in the formation of Nature, and empowered it with these three Gunas to go about its duties. Thus, the Maya had these three instruments at its disposal to weave a veil of delusions around the creature’s mind and intellect in order to make him believe in the reality of the world surrounding it just like an expert magician creates such make-belief magical world of illusions on stage that the audience forgets for the moment that it is merely watching a magic show, and instead begins to participate actively in it and live a life of delusions. As long as the magic show lasts, the audience forgets the reality of the world which actually exists. Likewise, as long as the effects of Maya last, the creature forgets who he actually is and that what he thinks and believes to be true is merely an illusion created by the maverick Maya.

The fact that Maya is like a dancer obeying the commands of its master, the Lord, is emphasized in Ram Charit Manas, 7/116/5-8. Let us see what these verses say—

भगतिहि सानुकूल रघुराया । ताते तेहि डरपति अति माया ॥ ५ ॥
 राम भगति निरुपम निरुपाधी । बसइ जासु उर सदा अबाधी ॥ ६ ॥
 तेहि बिलोकि माया सकुचाई । करि न सकइ कछु निज प्रभुताई ॥ ७ ॥
 अस बिचारि जे मुनि बिग्यानी । जाचहिं भगति सकल सुख खानी ॥ ८ ॥

bhagatihi sānukūla raghurāyā. tāte tēhi ḍarapati ati māyā. 5.
 rāma bhagati nirupama nirupādhī. basa'i jāsū ura sadā abādhī. 6.
 tēhi bilōki māyā sakucā'ī. kari na saka'i kachu nija prabhutā'ī. 7.
 asa bicāri jē muni bigyānī. jācahim bhagati sakala sukha khānī. 8.

Lord Ram is kind and favourably disposed towards ‘Bhakti’ (devotion). This is the reason why ‘Maya’ (delusion creating powers of the Lord) is scared of it (Bhakti)¹. [Here, Bhakti and Maya have been personified, and regarded as close associates of the Lord. ‘Bhakti’ is the favourite of Lord Ram, so the Lord’s maid known as ‘Maya’ is scared to offend the former. On the other hand, Maya does everything within its reach to please Bhakti in order to indirectly please her Lord, Sri Ram, and be in the Lord’s good books by being docile and obedient.] (5)

The spiritual virtue known as ‘Bhakti for Lord Ram’, or devotion for the Lord, is highly pure and immaculate; it is without any worldly taints or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness. [Whereas, on the other hand, ‘Maya’ is a corrupt entity, and so it has no moral strength to face the pure entity known as ‘Bhakti’. While ‘Bhakti’ leads the creature towards the Lord, ‘Maya’ pulls him away from him. While ‘Bhakti’ helps the creature obtain liberation and deliverance as well as eternal peace and bliss, ‘Maya’ does the opposite: it forces the creature in the quicksand of worldly delusions and its attendant miseries and torments.]

So, ‘Maya’ is afraid to disturb anyone in whose heart the eclectic spiritual virtue of ‘Bhakti’ finds a permanent residence. Maya is hesitant to play its tricks upon a person in whose heart Bhakti resides. [Maya knows that if it plays smart with the Lord’s devotee who has Bhakti or devotion for Lord Ram in his heart, then it is sure to offend the Lord who shall punish her for her demeanours because, as has been said above, the Lord favours Bhakti for its immaculate and pious nature as well as its endeavour to provide spiritual peace and liberation to the soul of the living being—which Maya does not do.] (6)

Maya is hesitant and reluctant to offend Bhakti and those who have this virtue in themselves; it is unable to play its dirty tricks on such persons who have Bhakti in their hearts. (7)

Taking this fact into consideration, wise sages who are learned and intelligent have deduced that ‘Bhakti’ is a mine of all happiness and peace. (8)

[Note—It has been said in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116 herein above that “Maya is like a dancer”. The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would synchronise all her dance moves in accordance with the liking of the lord for whom she dances. So obviously, Maya would not invite the wrath of her Lord, Sri Ram, by offending the Lord’s favourite maid known as Bhakti.]”

Maya is under the overall control of Ishwar, the Lord of creation—This fact has been emphasized in the Tripadvibhūt Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph no. 10 as follows—“The Maha Maya—or the dynamic powers of Ishwar (Brahm, the Supreme Being) that create delusions of stupendous proportions—is under the control and supervision of the Lord. The Maha Maya is obedient to its Lord, the Ishwar. [In fact, the Supreme Being is called ‘Ishwar’ because he is the ‘Lord of all’, including the Maya.]

The Maha Maya works in accordance to the wishes and desires of the Lord. It resolutely carries out what the Lord determines to do. The Maha Maya is eternally empowered by all the majestic and mystical powers and undiluted authority so that it can carry out the Lord’s wishes endlessly without interruption.

This Maha Maya is the great progenitor of other forms of endless Mayas which together create a web of delusions.

This Maha Maya is regarded as the magical body that Lord Vishnu assumes when the Lord wishes to do so and play around in a sporty manner. [That is why the various magical feats done by different incarnations of Vishnu are regarded as the Lord’s Maha Maya doing them. It is the delusory affect of the Maha Maya that the world believes that Vishnu has taken the form of a human etc. and done this and done that. Actually it is the Lord’s Maya that does it for him.]

The Maha Maya is so un-imaginably great in its reach and import that even the world’s creator known as Brahma (who is so wise that he created the Vedas, the repository of all knowledge and wisdom) cannot understand and fathom it.

Those who worship Lord Vishnu and are devoted to him are able to overcome the affects of Maha Maya and easily cross it. [That is, Maha Maya is not able to cast its delusory net on them.]

On the other hand, those who do not have any devotion for Lord Vishnu cannot overcome this great Maha Maya inspite of their best of efforts (10).”

The Kathrudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 43 describes how Maya was created by the Supreme Being and how it is kept under tight leash by him. To quote—“The divine entity that is transcendental and immaculate Consciousness and enlightenment personified cannot be affected or influenced by delusions and ignorance called Maya. At the same time, it remains free from the limitations that are inherent to all things that have a form and name that ignorance and delusions create in this world. [This world is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm, both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well as at the microcosmic level as the individual creature. Everything that exists has a form, no matter how gross or subtle it might be. Similarly, each form is assigned a particular name by which it is recognised. These are like artificial limitations and parameters imposed on an entity that is innately not limited and bounded. For instance, we have so many names for water, such as ocean, sea, lagoon, lake, pond, well, river, puddle etc., but the element known as ‘water’ is much beyond these limited descriptions. No one form can describe ‘water’ in its entirety; at the most each name describes one of the numerous qualities of water. Likewise, Brahm has revealed itself as countless creatures with as many forms and names, but none of them define Brahm even by a fraction. At the most, they only depict one of its countless and infinite glories.]

Since everything in existence is created by the supreme Lord known as Ishwar, it follows that this Maya is also a creation of Ishwar. But being the Lord of Maya, the Ishwar keeps the latter under leash and subservient to him. Though this is true but still Maya would not desist from showing its maverick tricks as proved by the fact that the inherently detached and untainted Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being which has no attributes and names, comes to be known as an ‘Ishwar’ when associated by Maya. [Technically, the word Ishwar refers to the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation when considered at the macrocosmic level. The very fact of ‘having a body, causal or otherwise’ shows that Maya has influenced Brahm. The fact that this Brahm in association with Maya created the rest of the creation is clearly reflected in the word ‘causal body’ of Brahm known as Ishwar—i.e. the body which is the ‘cause’ of the rest of the things.]

Extending this logic further, when the originally enlightened Brahm allowed itself to be accompanied by Maya, the latter cast its dark shadow of ignorance on the former and this resulted in what is known as ‘Agyan’ to come into existence. Being under the influence of this Agyan—ignorance of its truthful divine nature and supreme stature—Brahm became a Jiva, i.e. it became an ordinary living being who is oblivious of his exalted lineage, and who remains engrossed in an endless cycle of delusions and ignorance (43).”

The Atharva Veda’s Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 25 describes the concept of the *Maya Shakti* and how Brahm employs it to create an illusion of duality in something that is non-dual. To quote—“He whose eclectic form is eternal and whose authority is well established, he who has revealed himself as the whole creation which is nothing but his own form, he who is self-illuminated and revealed in the form of light, he who is uniformly all-pervading, all-encompassing, universal and omnipresent—it is this unique and non-dual supreme and transcendental Brahm who has revealed himself in four forms by employing his cosmic power to create illusions, known as the ‘Maya Shakti’. This Shakti enables Brahm to conjure up a magical world of miraculous finery and clarity that is so life-like and a virtual reality that one is unable to distinguish between its illusionary form and the actual reality that it hides. This is why the four

forms of the same Divinity known as Brahm are given four different names. Actually, they are the same Brahm appearing in all these four forms.

[It is like the same 'sky' being assigned different names depending upon its location—viz. the sky in an empty pitcher is called a 'Ghata-kash' ('Ghat' = pitcher; 'Akash' = sky), that within the walls of a monastery is called 'Matha-kash' ('Matha' = a monastery), that above the earth as the 'Akash', that beyond the gravitational pull of the earth as the 'Maha-kash', etc. But these are artificial boundaries created for the sky element which is otherwise an immutable, an indivisible, a uniform and a universal entity.

Another example can be cited of water contained in different containers or vessels being assigned different names—for instance we say 'the water in the cup', the 'water of the jug', the 'water of the river or the ocean' etc. Primarily, all samples of water are the same, and these different names do not change its basic nature or quality.

These four forms of Krishna are Gopal, Pradumna, Balraam and Aniruddha. There is no wonder in it. If Brahm can create this magnificent and fantastic world of stupendous variety and diverse aspects, shapes, colours and forms that continue to evolve endlessly and defy all imagination, it is a only child's play, so to say, for him to replicate himself in merely four forms when he can replicate himself in millions and countless more million forms in this vast and endless creation.] (25)."

Now, the Maya that is empowered by these three Gunas is called a 'Trigun-mayi Maya' or the Maya with three Gunas. These forms represent the three basic constituent qualities of creation, called the Gunas that give Maya its inherent nature and characteristic quality. These three Gunas are—Sata, Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used as a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These *three qualities* together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any 'Truth' after rigorously examining the 'truthfulness' of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the 'truthful Truth'. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute 'Truth', he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man is unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different Gunas, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of Maya gets tainted or distorted consonantly. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and

characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue to it . As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

The 'Trigunamayi Maya' is further classified into three sub-classes—viz. Sata Guni Maya, Raja Guni Maya, and Tama Guni Maya. This nomenclature depends upon the dominance of one or the other of the three Gunas in any given situation. Thus, when the Maya is dominated by the Sata Guna, it is called 'Sata Guni Maya'; when it is dominated by the Raja Guna, it is called 'Raja Guni Maya'; and when it is dominated by the Tama Guna, it is called 'Tama Guni Maya'.

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Purva Kand/Canto 1, verse no. 10, describes these three types of Mayas as follows—"The Maya that has the Tama Guna in dominance is represented by Rudra (the angry form of Shiva that brings about destruction and annihilation of creation).

The Maya that has the Sata Guna in dominance is represented by Vishnu (the sustainer, protector and the benevolent care-taker of creation).

The Maya that has the Raja Guna in dominance is represented by Brahma (the creator who indulged in the tricky job of creating all sorts of delusions and illusions, as well as the world with all its material sense objects and the subjects that would populate it and enjoy it, thereby keeping the creator engrossed in its magical charms).

The Maya that has a combination of the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna appearing in equal proportion as a dominant factor, with the Sata Guna taking the back seat, is represented by Indra and other Gods. None of the Gods in the countless number of Gods in the pantheon can be said to possess Satvic qualities—i.e. none of them can be cited as an example of exemplary qualities of virtuousness, nobility, auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, holiness, piety, purity, chastity, incorruptibility, trust worthiness, sincerity, honesty and other good virtues that the Sata Guna stands for.

Out of this pantheon of Gods it is only Lord Aghor (Shiva) who stands out as being neutral, full of equanimity, and as being indifferent to the effects of one or the other Gunas in the true sense. [That is, he is not at all influenced by the dominance of one or the other Gunas. His character is absolutely immaculately, steady and untainted because it is not at all affected by the characteristic influences of any of the three Gunas. This is why Lord Shiva is equated with Brahm, the Supreme Being. This is also why he is called 'Maheshwar'—the Great Lord, an epithet not even applied to Vishnu who is so loved by the creatures in the creation because he takes good care of them.] (10)."

The Atharva Veda's Krishna Upanishad, verse nos. 4-5, however, gives a slightly different view of Maya vis-à-vis the three Gunas as follows—"Maya (the dynamic power of the Supreme Being to create delusions) is said to be of three kinds—viz. Satvic, Rajasic and Tamasic depending upon the ratio of the three Gunas that is dominant in any one of its three aspects. Out of these, the Satvic Maya is said to be the foremost and the first one, the Rajasic the second one, and Tamsic the third and the lowest one.

The Satvic Maya is the dominant character of Lord Shiva, also known as Rudra, who is the most ardent and the wisest devotee of the Lord. [This is why Lord Shiva is also known as Mahadeva, the Great God. In spite of his cosmic role as being the ruthless and uncompromising concluder of creation, he is known to be of an exemplary calm disposition and peaceful temperament, submerged always in contemplation and meditation. Sata Guna inculcates the great virtues of renunciation and enlightenment in the entity that possesses it, so Shiva is the most dispassionate and enlightened of all the Gods. This makes him the patron deity of ascetics.]

Brahma, the creator, has Rajsic Maya as the dominant character. [Raja Guna is concerned with creation and constant involvement in it. This is the function of Brahma.]

The demons had the Tamasic Maya as the dominant character. [Tama Guna creates the tendency to be evil and sinful, characters unique to the demons.]

Thus, Maya is said to be of three kinds, and since the entire creation is a product of Maya it too has these three characteristics in it.

Besides these three forms there is the Maya which is the primary form of Maya from which these three have evolved. This primary Maya is directly related to Lord Vishnu, hence called the 'Vaishnavi Maya'. It is sort of the parent of all the other forms of Maya. It is so powerful and so strong that no one can ever defeat it; not even Brahma the creator could overcome it. [This is the reason why Brahma, though being the creator of the Vedas—which are supposed to be a repository of all knowledge in creation—could not comprehend who Narayan or Vishnu was. This fact is amply clear in Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad in which Narayan himself taught the creator the truth of his (Narayan's) divine Self.] (4-5)."

The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 9-10 describe the effects of Maya, verse nos. 15-18 the relationship between Maya and the Atma, and verse nos. 44-45 the fact that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma as well as of Brahm. Now let us examine these verses and learn more about Maya—

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse nos. 9-10 = It is on the inspiration and command of the Lord that the eyes see things having forms and colours; it is on his orders and empowerment that the ears hear sounds. Similarly, all other sense organs work expressly on his command and are regulated by him. They are inclined to remain engrossed in their respective objects in the external world because the Lord has created them so that the Atma can perceive the beauty, the majestic charm and the magnificence of the creation crafted by the Lord through their medium.

[Since the Atma is a microcosmic personification of Brahm that lives in the gross body of the creature, it follows that it is actually Brahm himself who enjoys the sights of the world created by no one else but him. The Lord plays with his own creation through the medium of the Atma and the gross body of the creature in which this Atma lives!

The different sense organs of perception (such as the eye which sees, the nose that smells, the ears that hear, the tongue that tastes, and the skin that feels and touches), as well as the organs of action (such as the hands that do deeds and receive anything, the legs that take Brahm albeit in the form of the resident Atma to its designated place, the mouth that helps Brahm to speak and eat, the excretory organs that helps Brahm to get rid of waste from its immediate vicinity inside the body, and the genitals that helps Brahm to reproduce the world and help it sustain its own self perpetually) are the instruments employed by Brahm to interact with and sustain the world of his own creation.

But it has been asserted in the Upanishads that the Atma is inherently neutral and dispassionate. So how and why does it get involved in the gross body through the medium of the above organs? The answer is that it is influenced by 'Maya'—the power of delusions. That is, the Jiva (living being) who is deluded and overcome by Maya is the one who gets involved or indulgent in the world, and the Jiva who is wise and enlightened is freed from this fetter. It is Maya that shrouds the Jiva's intellect and mind and makes him behave as if he is ignorant of the Truth though his 'truthful self' happens to the wise and enlightened Atma. This is the great paradox of creation.]

This inclination of the sense organs to be attracted towards their respective objects is due to Maya—i.e. by the dynamic power of Brahm which makes falsehoods appear to be real, thereby making the sense organs think that the objects of the world which they pursue are true and real, and that they would derive true pleasure and joy by being associated with them or being in their company. The sense organs are the instruments that the Atma, as a representative of Brahm

residing inside the creature's body, uses to 'see', to interact and to sustain the gross world of material sense objects.

The desire of the creature to swerve towards the sense objects of the world is due to this affect of Maya, and it is not the creature's inherent and natural inclination. [This is because the true self of the creature is the Atma which is inherently dispassionate and wise. It has no desire for material comforts and pleasures derived from the sense objects of the mortal world. But when Maya intervenes as the spoil-sport, the Atma gets deluded, and thereby it loses its pristine purity and becomes tainted.] (9-10).

“Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse nos. 15-16 = A wise person who has realised that the Maheswar (Brahm) is an entity that is beyond the grasp of any of the sense perceptions of the gross body as well as the various faculties of the subtle mind-intellect complex, should discard taking recourse to rationality, logics and proofs to realise Brahm. Instead, he should concentrate on realizing Brahm by the medium of his inner-self—i.e. by contemplation and meditation, by turning inwards and focusing his attention on the pure consciousness that is self-illuminated and which resides in his bosom, rather than searching for Brahm in the external world. It is only then that he can attain true knowledge of Brahm, or become truly ‘Brahm-realised, wise and enlightened’.

It is the Atma that is self-illuminated, while the external world of Maya (or the world generated by delusions of the mind) is enveloped in darkness. Whereas the Atma is an embodiment of light and enlightenment, Maya on the other hand stands for darkness, delusions and ignorance.

[In other words, when a spiritual aspirant turns inwards in search of the ‘Great Truth’, he discovers an entity that is self-illuminated, radiant and glorious as the celestial Sun. This is the Atma. Like the Sun that can be said to be the virtual Lord of the solar system, this Atma is also the Lord of the microcosm known as the Jiva, the living being. Microcosm exists because there is a ‘macrocosm’; one logically proves the existence of the other. For instance, if there is a day then there must be a night, and vice-versa. So, if the Atma is a Lord of the Jiva, its macrocosmic counterpart would naturally be the Lord of the whole existence at the cosmic plane. The latter aspect of the omnipresent, ubiquitous, all-pervading, immutable and immanent Atma is therefore called ‘Maheshwar’, the supreme Lord the seeker was searching for when he had set out to find the truthful Lord of creation who is the ultimate and the supreme Authority. This Lord is known as Brahm, the Supreme Being.

Since the Atma is a representative of this Supreme Being residing in the inner-being of all the creatures, it follows that it is also Maheshwar. It is like the case of the same sky being assigned two different names of Ghata-Kash and Maha-kash by the virtue of the sky's ('Akash') location inside the body of a hollow pitcher ('Ghat') and outside it respectively.

The Atma is like the flame of a lantern or a candle. This flame itself is self-illuminated, splendourous and a brilliant source of light; this flame illuminates the surrounding world by its light. Sans this flame, the surrounding area would be in pitch darkness. Similarly, the world would be enveloped in a thick veil of darkness if the Atma—the living factor of life known as the ‘consciousness’—were not present in it. To draw a parallel from the physical world, the latter would be a sea of darkness if there was no Sun to light it up.

From the metaphysical point of view, the outside world is dark because it is the creation of Maya—the power of this Maheshwar to willfully create a veil of delusions around himself. Why would the Maheshwar do so is answered in verse no. 1 of Kanda/Canto 1.

By corollary, Maya can be removed by its own creator. The clue to the creation of Maya is with the Maheshwar (Atma at the micro level, and Brahm at the macro level of creation), and therefore it is the Maheshwar himself who can dismantle it. This simply means that Maya can be overcome by the Atma itself should it decide to do so, and hence it also follows that the Jiva, the living being, is himself to blame for the shroud of delusions that he has weaved around himself because this Jiva's truthful ‘self’ is the Atma.

The colourful world of fascinating charm and variety that is observed is actually a tapestry of delusions that the Maheshwar has created himself.] (15-16)."

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18 = There is never a similarity between the self-evident and cognizable Atma, and the illusionary and deluding Maya.

It is well known and established by doing self research, applying of logic, contemplating and pondering deeply, separating fact from fiction, intelligent analysis and wise derivation of the truth that the supreme Atma, which is consciousness and self-illuminated, has nothing to do with Maya at all.

The debates about the truthfulness or otherwise of anything in this gross material world of sense objects that are marked by delusions are limited to the world. Such debates are the subject matters revolving around Vidya (knowledge, skill and expertise in any given subject) or A-vidya (the opposite of Vidya). It has no bearing on the Atma which is beyond the purview and jurisdiction of either the Vidya or the A-vidya for the simple reason that the Atma is an ethereal entity that transcends the defining boundaries of the gross world (17-18).

[Note—The Jiva, i.e. the living being, is either aware of things in this world or is unaware of them. The state of existence when the Jiva is aware of this world and its objects is known as 'Vidya' or knowledge and awareness, while the opposite would naturally be 'A-Vidya' or lack of knowledge and awareness. In the field of spiritualism, knowledge of the truth of the Atma is known as 'Vidya', and its lack is 'A-Vidya'.

Now, since the Atma is said to be eternally self-illuminated and enlightened, to cast doubts on its inherent divinity and greatness as well as its existence comes under the definition of 'A-Vidya', while to be sure and convinced of the same is categorized as 'Vidya'.]

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 44 = Any Authority is established by its inherent and intrinsic dynamic powers, strength and potentials. When things are subjected to certain laws and regulations it is a sign that there is some Authority to control and regulate them. In other words, since the creation has an in-built regulatory mechanism that controls each and every phase of existence, it is too obvious to doubt that there is an invisible Authority that gives effect to this control and regulation mechanism. This 'Authority' is Brahm. Brahm and Authority are not separable from one another; they are synonymous with each other (just like a king and his royal authority are inseparable from one another and synonymous with each other).

Brahm is the 'Supreme Authority' in creation inasmuch there is no Authority beyond Brahm. Brahm is the only Authoritative Being in creation. Brahm is the Authority that has the power and the authority which are inviolable and sacrosanct. The fact is that there is no 'Authority' other than Brahm in this creation—and that makes Brahm 'supreme'.

It is also a fact that Maya (delusions) has no real existence. [Maya is an instrument in the hands of Brahm to exercise his authority over creation. It is Maya that helps Brahm to keep the wheel of creation rotating endlessly by keeping the creatures deluded and trapped. When the time comes for winding up the creation, Brahm exercises his 'authority' and removes the smokescreen of Maya. This smokescreen can also be voluntarily removed by Brahm-realised persons because they are themselves Brahm personified!] (44).

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 45 = Wise ascetics realise that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma that resides in their inner-self.

[In other words, they realise that no one else is to blame for the web of delusions that they have created around themselves voluntarily. This is because their Atma is their truthful 'self', and it is this Atma that has created the Maya.]

However, this Maya and its negative and deluding effects are blocked by the knowledge of Brahm. It then appears only as a neutral entity that is as ineffective as an image or reflection seen in a mirror.

[In other words, those ascetics who are Brahm-realised are not affected by the negative influences of Maya. The latter seems to exist in this world because for the simple reason that the world exists, as without the Maya this world cannot exist. Maya and the artificial world go hand-in-hand; they co-exist. In other word, both the Maya and the world are imaginations of the mind; if the mind so decides, both would vanish. Maya has any relevance only till the time a man acknowledges the presence of the gross world—because the latter is a product of the former. But once he becomes enlightened enough to understand that the world is imaginary and therefore non-truth, it is a natural corollary that the relevance of the Maya is done away with. Instead of delusions, he begins to see the ‘truth’ everywhere. And this ‘truth’ is Brahm. Therefore, for a Brahm-realised person Maya ceases to exist, and with its cessation the world also ceases to exist.

This is all there is to Maya’s importance and influence; it does not go any further than this point. It does not affect the inner-self of the wise ascetic who is freed from its cunning tricks, who understands that if he so determines he can easily overcome both the delusions and artificiality created by his imaginative mind.

This is why Brahm-realised and self-realised ascetics become enlightened and empowered enough that they can see the secret ‘truth’ in the same world in which other ordinary men cannot!

The reflection of any object that is seen in a mirror appears to be as true and real as the object itself, leading to so perfect a delusion that a man who does not know the real situation would begin to believe, after sometime, that the reflection or the image seen in the mirror is the object itself. This man forgets that what he sees is simply a ‘reflection or an image’ for the simple reason that the medium of seeing the object under question is a ‘mirror’ that has the grand virtue of creating a perfect image of the real thing.

When a wise man sees an image of an object in a mirror he immediately knows that there surely must be the object somewhere in the vicinity. So he looks around to find it, and then he is able to have a sight of the real thing. Say, is it not foolish to run behind the water seen in a mirage during a hot summer afternoon in desert even if one comes across a real source of water close at hand?

Therefore, is it not foolish to run behind the mirage-like world seeking peace and happiness when one knows that it is imaginary and misleading, as well as transient and perishable, instead of attempting to realise the ‘spiritual truth’ that would bestow him with peace and happiness that are not only everlasting but have depth and profundity as well.

The ‘image or the reflection’ seen in a mirror is never the real thing though it appears to be so. Similarly, when the supreme Truth (the cosmic Consciousness revealed in the form of ‘life’ in this creation) is seen against the background of Maya, it appears in the form of the visible gross world. When the same Truth is seen with the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment, it appears in the form of Brahm. Again, while the term ‘Brahm’ refers to the Truth at the macro level of creation, the same Truth is referred to as the ‘Atma’ when considered at the micro level of existence.

Hence, to conclude, a Brahm realised man sees this world as a reflection or an image of Brahm. It is in the mirror of existence that he sees Brahm being reflected. Therefore, even if the world is removed Brahm would still be there—just like the case of an object remaining in place even if the mirror that reflects its image is removed from sight.] (45).”

The Atma Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, verse nos. 26, 28-29 are very explicit in the principle that all the spiritual problems that are created for a Jiva, the living being, are the cause of Maya, and that by eliminating Maya he can easily overcome them. To quote—

“verse no. 26 = How is it possible that an enlightened and a highly realised ascetic who has virtually become Brahm personified after having attained high degree of self-realisation and its attendant enlightenment ever take a birth again because creation and its expansion are the effects created by Maya (the powers of Brahm to create delusions) which this ascetic has already conquered and eliminated from its roots.

All fetters and bondages having their genesis in Maya, and all obstacles that this Maya creates in the path of one's Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance) would no longer apply to an ascetic who has eliminated Maya as a stepping-stone to Brahm-hood.

[The very fact that he is 'wise and enlightened', the fact that he has developed a high degree of renunciation and detachment from the world as well as the body and their respective allurements and temptations is due to his having vanquished Maya. Elimination of Maya is a prerequisite for being Brahm-realised in the first place. Hence, when Maya is trounced, there is no question of this creation ever raising its evil hood again. All the problems are created when one is not aware of the truth and is instead enveloped in a shroud of ignorance and delusions. For instance, a man becomes terrified when he sees a length of harmless rope when he thinks, out of ignorance of the truth and its attendant delusions, that it is venomous snake. He is also horrified to see a lifeless cuticle of a snake if he does not know that this cuticle has no life in it and is simply a dead piece of discarded skin. But once he becomes aware of the truth, he loses all fears of these two things.

All spiritual problems are created by Maya; the Jiva (the living being) is subjected to all spiritual torments and mental dilemmas because he is embraced by Maya. When he breaks free from its clutches he is like a slave finding his final freedom from eternal slavery. Under the overpowering influence of Maya, he had erroneously treated his gross body as his 'self', and had treated the world as real and truthful. When this Maya is eliminated, then obviously this erroneous notion is dispelled and the light of true knowledge shines through much like the brilliant rays of the sunlight breaking through the shroud of thick cloud to illuminate the world, which in this case is his inner self. Say, how can the darkness of ignorance and its accompanying phantoms and ghosts live when the bright sun shines? He realises that his 'self' is not the body but the pure conscious Atma, and that this Atma is an eternal, sublime, ethereal and a holy Spirit as compared to the gross body which has characters that are the opposite of those possessed by the Atma. For instance, the body dies and perishes while the Atma is an eternal and imperishable entity. He understands that birth and death are limited to the gross body and have no relevance vis-à-vis the Atma.

He also realises that this Atma is a microcosmic image of the macrocosmic Atma of the entire creation, and that the latter is known as Brahm. That is why when a self-realised ascetic proclaims 'I am Brahm' he is speaking an absolute truth without any pretensions and deceit.

The Atma in its cosmic form is known as the 'Parmatma', the supreme Atma. Neither the Atma nor the Parmatma ever takes a birth or dies.] (26).

"verse nos. 28-29 = Brahm has no pretensions and coverings; it has no deceit, conceit and falsehoods associated with it. Therefore, it is the unadulterated and naked 'truth' that has no distortions whatsoever.

Whether or not one believes in the existence of anything is actually the function of the intellect and the mind. It is the mind-intellect that decides for a creature whether anything exists or does not exist in this world.

This intellect-mind complex is a subtle part or component of the gross body which is like a covering of the Atma, the pure consciousness, representing Brahm. The fact of the matter is that Brahm has no such thing as a mind-intellect complex for the simple reason that Brahm has no gross body with its various components, including the subtle component known as the mind-intellect.

Therefore, Brahm, the pure cosmic Consciousness, is never deluded, is never confused and is never in any doubt about the 'truth' of anything, including this world. One of the obvious reasons for this is that Brahm is the one who has created this world by employing his own dynamic powers of creating Maya and has employed his own Shakti (powers, authority and energy) to give it its shape. Therefore Brahm clearly knows the secret of this world; he is aware how it has come into being; he is privy to its hidden mysteries.

Because of the fact that the Atma (the pure self) of a living being is none else but this Brahm in a personified form, it follows that a wise and self-realised person knows that this world is false and imaginary; that it is a creation of Maya and its stupendous maverism known as Maya Shakti. He allows his 'self' to interact with this world only to the extent that is absolutely necessary for him because he has to live in it till the time the Atma has completed its journey and reached its destination. This 'destination' is final spiritual liberation and deliverance, final emancipation and salvation—which are collectively called 'Mukti'.

By corollary, once the world becomes irrelevant for a self-realised and enlightened man, his body too becomes equally irrelevant. This is because both the body and the world are gross and a part of the creation of Maya which has trapped his soul in its vice-like grip.

Since all delusory notions arising out of Maya that make the existence of the world possible (like the case of a snake existing in the rope) are functions of the mind-intellect, it follows that the Atma has no such conceptions arising in it because it is free from Maya and its effects, as the Atma is naturally and intrinsically highly enlightened, self-illuminated, knowledgeable and wise.

In other words, only when the Atma is under the influence of Maya does it regard the world as true, meaningful and relevant. Once the veil of Maya and its grip is removed, the Atma is able to perceive the truth of the world—and this 'truth' is that the world is imaginary and entrapping; it is the result of the imagination of the fertile mind, the mind that makes a man think that the rope is a snake!

When the stupidity and ignorance of the mind and intellect are done away with, both the fallacious conception of the rope being a snake, and the inherently false world to be true are done away with. Thereafter only the truth prevails, and this 'truth' is the spirituality of the 'self' which is nothing but the pure consciousness known as the Atma.

So we conclude that when Maya is removed, the Brahm (in its personified form as the Atma of the living being) is convinced that the world is false and gross by nature (28-29)."

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse nos. 33, 44-45 describe how Maya creates this world.

"Verse no. 33 = Only those whose inner-self has been thoroughly cleansed of all sorts of faults and shortcomings (associated with life in this corrupt mundane world embedded with delusions and ignorance), and is thereby rendered holy, untainted and pure, are eligible to receive or accept or see or witness and experience the supreme transcendental Divinity (Brahm) which is self-illuminated.

Those who are covered in a veil of Maya (delusions) cannot ever expect to have a divine sight or view of the supreme Lord (33).

"Verse no. 44 = Any Authority is established by its inherent dynamic powers and potentials. When things are subjected to certain laws and regulations it is a sign that there is some Authority to control and regulate them. In other words, since the creation has an in-built regulatory mechanism that controls each and every phase of existence, it is too obvious to doubt that there is an invisible Authority that gives effect to this control and regulation mechanism. This 'Authority' is Brahm. Brahm and Authority are not separable from one another, they are synonymous with each other (just like a king and his authority are inseparable from one another and synonymous with each other).

The fact is that there is no 'Authority' other than Brahm in this creation. It is also a fact that Maya (delusions) has no real existence. [Maya is an instrument in the hands of Brahm to exercise his authority over creation. It is Maya that helps Brahm to keep the wheel of creation rotating endlessly by keeping the creatures deluded and trapped. When the time comes for winding up the creation, Brahm exercises his 'authority' and removes the smokescreen of Maya.

This smokescreen can also be voluntarily removed by Brahm-realised persons because they are themselves Brahm personified!] (44).

“Verse no. 45 = Wise ascetics realise that Maya is a creation of the Atma that resides in their inner-self.

[In other words, they realise that no one else is to blame for the web of delusions that they have created around themselves voluntarily. This is because their Atma is their truthful ‘self’, and it is this Atma that has created the Maya.]

However, this Maya and its effects are blocked by the knowledge of Brahm. It then appears only as a neutral entity that is as ineffective as an image or reflection seen in a mirror.

[In other words, those ascetics who are Brahm-realised are not affected by Maya. The latter does exist in this world because for the simple reason that the world exists, as without the Maya this world cannot exist. But that is all there is to Maya’s importance and influence; it does not go any further than this point. It does not affect the inner-self of the wise ascetic who is freed from its cunning tricks. This is why Brahm-realised ascetics can see the ‘truth’ in the same world which other ordinary men cannot!] (45).”

Having read about all the maverick tricks done by Maya, it now becomes pertinent to learn about the *three Gunas* that are the hidden forces used by Maya to do the tricks described above. These three Gunas are discussed in a note appended to Chaupai line no. 8 below.]

ग्यान मान जहँ एकउ नाहीं । देख ब्रह्म समान सब माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

gyāna māna jaham̐ ēka'u nāhīm̐. dēkha brahma samāna saba māhīm̐. 7.

‘Gyan¹’ (as opposed to Agyan or Avidya) is that divine and magnificent virtue which does not allow the creature to harbour any negative qualities such as ‘Maan’ (ego, sense of false pride) etc. This virtue also enables the creature to see Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, as being an all-pervading, omnipresent and universal entity that resides uniformly in all the living beings as their Atma.

In other words, true Gyan makes a creature realise that it is the same cosmic Consciousness that lives inside the gross body of all living beings, that it is an immutable and imperishable entity, that it is subtle and sublime as compared to the gross nature of the world and the body of the creature, and that it is the truthful identity of all living beings in this creation. Gyan also enlightens the creature of the fact that the entire world exists because there is consciousness in it, and without this consciousness the world is a dark and dead place.

Therefore, if one wishes to acquire true knowledge about this world then he must search this ‘consciousness’ which is the universal Truth, instead of its many manifestations which are merely a reflection of it.² (7)

[Note—¹The virtues that are covered by the concept of Gyan have been outlined in Lord Krishna’s Geeta, Canto 13, verse no. 7-11 as follows—“A person in whom the following eighteen faults or negative traits are not present is said to have acquired Gyan—(1) Maan (ego, false sense of pride and superiority), (2) Dambha (deceit, conceit, pretensions, falsehood, crookedness, wickedness), (3) Hinsa (violence, both mental and physical), (4) absence of Kshamaa (lacking forgiveness, tolerance and fortitude), (5) to be Tedhaa (not being straightforward, to be cunning, wicked, crooked and deceitful), (7) to lack the desire to serve one’s Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide), (8) Apavitra (impurity of mind, heart, body, behaviour and thoughts), (9)

Asthir (unsteadiness, fickleness, transient nature), (10) A-nigrihit Mana (lack of concentration and regulation of the mind and heart; lack of self control or self restraint), (11) Aasakti (infatuated with the desire to gratify the sense organs of the body; to be attracted by and attached to the material objects of senses in the world), (12) Ahankar (pride, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy and vanity), (13) to seek happiness in a world dominated by birth and death, old age and its associated problems, countless sorrows and miseries, (14) to be engrossed in and infatuated with the household and its numerous relationships such as a family consisting of the son, the wife etc., (15) to have Mamta (sense of endearment and infatuation with the world and its material things, as well the household and its related attachments), (16) the feeling of either Harsha or Shoka (happiness or sorrows respectively) upon acquisition of anything or lose of another in this mortal mundane world, (17) lack of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God), and (18) not finding peace and happiness in when alone and free from all disturbances (i.e. not preferring solitude and serenity which is conducive to spiritual practices) but instead liking the company of people who prefer to remain indulgent in this material world of sense objects with great passion and longing.

²It's like the case of many images formed of the same object in mirrors of varying sizes and shapes and placed at different angles from the principle object. Each mirror presents a different view of the same object. Likewise, the 'cosmic super Consciousness' is the only universal Truth and Reality, and the world that is weaved around this truthful entity is merely a reflection of the reality and not the reality itself.

This eclectic knowledge of 'non-duality', i.e. of the presence of one single non-dual entity known as Brahm or the cosmic super Consciousness everywhere in this creation as the reality and the ultimate truth, is known as 'Gyan', and it leads to true enlightenment and self-realisation.

'Enlightenment'—because this knowledge begins to illuminate his inner self with the light of true knowledge like the self-illuminating light of the sun, a light that cannot any longer eclipsed and covered by the veil of darkness caused by ignorance or Avidya. It helps to fine tune the instruments of the mind and intellect by which the creature acquires knowledge of the external world. Just like the case of a person being able to see something clearly in daylight as compared to the darkness of the night, the creature who has Gyan is able to see the truth and reality of this world without any confusion. When the darkness of ignorance is removed, the light of knowledge shines through. This light removes all fears of ghosts and phantoms that had unnecessarily been tormenting the creature for generations.

'Self-realisation'—because the creature understands that his 'true self' is the cosmic Consciousness that resides in his gross body in the form of his Atma or soul, and that it is his true identity. This awareness makes his mind expand beyond the narrow confines of thought that makes him develop the erroneous notion of 'this is mine' and 'that is yours'—because with the acquisition of this divine knowledge of the universality of the Atma and the reality of existence, the creature's outlook and vision broadens, and he rises above selfish gross considerations to see the world from the holistic perspective of the Atma which is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and universal.

When one begins to see all the living beings equally then obviously no one is superior and no one is junior in this world—because the same universal Consciousness known as the Atma lives in all the living beings. Further, this whole world is a manifestation of the same Brahm playing different roles. The variety in appearance is due to veil cast by the Trigunmayi Maya according to the ratio in which the three Gunas are present in any given situation. Therefore, a wise, enlightened and self-realised creature dissolves all his sense of ego and pride because he is neither senior to anyone nor junior to anyone.]

कहिअ तात सो परम बिरागी । तून सम सिद्धि तीनि गुन त्यागी ॥ ८ ॥

kahi'a tāta sō parama birāgī. tṛṇa sama sid'dhi tīni guna tyāgī. 8.

Oh dear (Laxman)! A person who has completely disassociated himself from any sense of pride or ego arising out of acquisition of the various Siddhis (mystical powers, authority, successes and acclaim)¹ and has become immune to the influence of the three Gunas (the three basic qualities in a living being)² is indeed eligible to be called a true 'Vairāgi' or a person who has sincerely, honestly and truly renounced the world and its temptations. (8)

[Note—¹The word *Siddhi* refers to various esoteric and powerful spiritual, supernatural, mystical and occult powers and spiritual achievements that an aspirant acquires as a result of certain religious practices, carrying out some mystical rituals, or observance of strict codes as prescribed in ancient texts. Such magnificent spiritual or mystical supernatural powers are not normally available to an ordinary creature, and therefore those who have them are highly respected and sought after in society. The different Siddhis are exceptional supernatural powers and mystical abilities that one acquires.

The Siddhis are the mystical powers, the moral authority and spiritual empowerment that a person possesses due to his religious practices such as doing Yoga or meditation, Dhyan or contemplation, Tapa or observing penances and austerities, Daan or giving away charity, Dam or practicing self-restraint, Dharma or following the tenets of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and probity etc. Acquisition of Siddhi is natural when one succeeds in his spiritual practices and they bring immense acclaim and authority in their wake even as a diligent, honest, intelligent and hard-working man acquires fame and prosperity in this world.

The term 'Siddhi' has a wider ramification as it also incorporates accomplishments of various kinds in diverse fields besides the spiritual, mystical and occult. For instance, acquisition of expert skills as an accomplished musician, an artist, a singer, an archer, a military strategist, an orator, a doctor, an engineer, a writer, a philosopher, a teacher, etc.—all of them can be said to have Siddhi in their respective field of activity and vocation. Therefore, rare achievement of any kind in any specialised field is to acquire Siddhi or expertise or acumen in that field.

The attainment of Siddhi literally means to obtain success in one's endeavours, to be skilled in one's trade, to be an expert in any field. In the context of Yoga and spiritual practices, it refers to the achievement of certain mystical and super-natural powers. A man who is not wise thinks that by acquiring some or the other Siddhi he would be liberated and delivered from his worldly fetters. But he is deluded in this thinking. Instead of reaching his actual spiritual goal of finding 'true' Mukti—or 'real' freedom from the bondage of the body and the world which comes with realizing the Truth known as the 'self' and the pure conscious Atma that is eternally free, he would be bogged down and trapped by following this or that method in his hurry to obtain some kind of Siddhi in the fallacious hope that these Siddhis would help him find Mukti. They do not; instead of liberating him they trap him further. When he attains Siddhis or when he acquires some sort of mystical and super-natural powers, he is usually filled with a sense of pride and achievement. There are good chances that he would boast of his prowess and powers, strutting around haughtily displaying them, and expecting honours and acclaim. Indeed, his wishes would be fulfilled because he would be crowded by favour seekers and those who need his intervention to solve their worldly problems, but in the bargain he loses his spiritual peace and attainments. Public advertisement of spiritual achievements would undermine his quest for spiritual upliftment and liberation; it would rob his soul of its yearning for peace, tranquility and serenity. Company of the world would distract him from his chosen path. Therefore, acquisition of various Siddhis by a man who is not sure of his goal in life would be similar to acquisition of material wealth by a

greedy man who becomes so obsessed by it that he forgets everything else and his selfishness and greed increase exponentially instead of abetting in the least. He is also like a man who has acquired scriptural knowledge only with the intention of gaining worldly fame and as a means of livelihood, who wishes to milk this knowledge for pecuniary gains—for in the process his spirit is demeaned, denigrated and demoted.

Such persons can never hope to find spiritual welfare and upliftment. They can never hope to reach their final spiritual goal of finding Mukti. They are so foolish they have frittered away the golden chance of using Yoga as an instrument to achieve spiritual freedom and deliverance by bargaining its achievements such as acquisition of Siddhis to get worldly benefits.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no. 16 refers to *nine Siddhis*. They are the following—(i) ‘Anima’ ‘अणिमा’ means the power to become microscopic or so minute that one becomes invisible to the naked eye; to become small like an atom; (ii) ‘Mahima’ is to have majesty, glory and fame; to be honoured and acknowledged for one’s achievements, wisdom, erudition, knowledge and skills; to become huge like a mountain, thereby standing out and being unique or special in a crowd; (iii) ‘Garima’ is to be heavy-weight in any field, to have special qualities that give one’s ideas and words a great amount of importance and weight; to have stature, dignity, decorum, gravity and significance; (iv) ‘Laghima’ is the grand virtue of being simple and humble in spite of being great, powerful and authoritative; it is to have simplicity and humility despite possessing grandeur, majesty, power, authority and magnificence; (v) ‘Praapti’ is to be able to attain, gain or obtain anything wished or desired for; (vi) ‘Praakramya’ is to have valour, ardour, strength, powers, prowess, potential and punch leading to triumph, glory and majesty; (vii) ‘Ishwatwa’ is to be able to have lordship or sway over everything else; to be able to rule over others; (viii) ‘Vashitwa’ is to be able to control and subdue others, and exert influence on them so much so that they become obedient and subservient; and (ix) ‘Praakaashya’ is to be able to assume any form one wishes.

Sometimes, Paraakramya is replaced by ‘Praakaamya’ which means irresistible will. But they imply the same thing because one obtains victory and glory only when one has an irresistible desire to attain it.

According to some versions, ‘Mukti’, or to obtain liberation and deliverance from all sorts of bondages and fetters, is also regarded as one of the Siddhis. It is closely related to ‘Moksha’ meaning final spiritual emancipation and deliverance of the aspirant.

According to some other accounts, ‘Bhukti’—i.e. the ability to enjoy whatever one wishes to acquire and enjoy, is also one of the nine Siddhis.

Often only *eight Siddhis* are cited. They are the same as the ones listed above, except that under this classification one of the nine Siddhis is removed.

The Upanishads that describe these Siddhis are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 151-155, Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 56-102; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 23-24. (b) Atharva Veda—Sita Upanishad, verse no. 37 (which says that goddess Sita is like the Kamdhenu cow who grants the eight Siddhis); Annupurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8 (which says that a wise aspirant should not be deluded by Siddhis); Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 12 (which says that the eight Siddhis are enshrined in the first outer ring of the Sri Chakra used to worship Goddess Tripura).

A truly wise and enlightened ascetic is one who *does not get deluded by the various Siddhis* that naturally come to him as a reward of success in Yoga. This fact has been affirmed in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22, 62, 76-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 62; Annupurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8.

Let us quote the Atharva Veda’s *Annupurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 5-8 on this point of not exploiting the acquisition of Siddhis for worldly gains—

“verse no. 5 = “A person who is stupid and of low intellect would yearn for acquiring the various Siddhis (mystical powers that come by doing Yoga and other spiritual practices), and to obtain success in his endeavours he would adopt any method that he lays his hand on. All the numerous methods are like webs that would entangle him. He tries to obtain Siddhi by any method available, without paying attention to their effectiveness and worth. (5).

“verse no. 6 = Material things of the world (such as wealth), Mantras (spiritual formulas used during various religious practices), various auspicious deeds and actions, as well as Kaal Shakti (the power of ‘death’ to provide a person freedom from the torments and numerous problems that he suffers from while he lived in the world and had a body, because with ‘death’ he leaves them behind) can be helpful in obtaining various worldly acclaim and super-natural powers known as ‘Siddhis’¹, but they can not provide the supreme Truth to the spiritual seeker. None of the Siddhis can ever provide the much sought-after ‘Param Pad’, literally meaning the supreme stature, or the state of being highly exalted and enlightened, to the spiritual aspirant.

[A man might do great sacrifices using immense wealth and huge amounts of material things as donations and charities in order to attain some special powers. He might repeat some Mantras or undertake some mystical occult practices to acquire some mystical and super-natural powers. He might even spend his time and energy in doing auspicious deeds in the hope that some special mystical benefits would accrue to him, that he would acquire some sort of special powers and authority not available to others. He might even prefer to wait out his time to die so that he can find liberation and deliverance from his miseries. But all these would not give him access to the real and truthful form of Siddhi—i.e. he would not have achieved success in the real sense.

The reason is that all the so-called Siddhis bestow upon him some kind of super-natural powers that are enumerated below, and he would be swept off his feet by being able to perform miracles that other lesser mortals can’t do. This would make him proud, arrogant and egoist; he would lose his footing or mooring or bearing when surrounded by acclaim and fame that come naturally to a person who has access to super-human powers. He would lose sight of the real goal of life to find final liberation and deliverance, to acquire knowledge of the essence known as the Truth. He would remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death; he would remain attached to the world and the body because of the simple fact that the mystical and super-natural powers acquired by him can be used only as long as there is a body.

This is because the Siddhis are dependent upon the body—they need the efforts of the body in their acquisition, and they can be employed only as long as the man is alive, for once he dies they become irrelevant. A dead man does not display any mystical powers. So obviously, the bondage of the body is still there; the dependence on the body is not done away with, and therefore no true freedom is obtained.

As for obtaining freedom after physical death of the body, this is also not possible because the creature would take another birth in order to fulfill his unrequited desires and to suffer the consequences of the deeds done in the previous life.

Hence, neither the obtaining of various Siddhis in the physical world that might give super-natural powers to the person would raise him to an exalted stature that would make him the supreme authority in this creation, nor can this stature be obtained upon death. This is because the ‘supreme stature’ that is referred to here is the stature beyond which nothing is to be attained or reached. In this context, the various Siddhis are just milestones marking the various stages of his spiritual progress, but they are not the final goal, they aren’t his spiritual destination. Similarly, a creature would be re-born after death if he has not found ‘true’ form of liberation and deliverance or ‘Mukti’.

Therefore, neither attaining super-natural powers known as Siddhis, nor the death of the physical body are any indications of one’s attainment of the supreme state of exalted spiritual existence. That is, one cannot be called freed from the grossness of the existential world and the

body if he acquires some sort of magical powers that can enable him to do super-natural things and perform miracles that other ordinary creatures cannot do—such as being able to lift himself against the forces of gravity, or being able to control his breath for prolonged periods of time, or being able to make himself small or large in size than what he actually is, or being able to leave the gross body for a limited time and travel in space like the wind. All these things can be done easily by acquiring the various Siddhis that come naturally as a reward of Yoga.

Similarly, one cannot be called freed from the fetters of the body as well as the world simply because he has died and left the gross body. If the mind and the heart had been hooked to this world and unwilling to leave the body at the time of death, though of course it had to do so because the body had withered away by the natural process of aging, the creature is bound to take another birth so as to fulfill its desires and hopes of continuing to enjoy the world and the body.

Then, what is it? The answer lies in the realisation of the fact that the ‘true self’ is the Atma, that this Atma is the pure consciousness that is the universal ubiquitous Truth, that this Atma is synonymous with the supreme Brahm who is the only almighty Authority in creation, and that the Atma is endowed naturally with all the powers and authority that one seeks to get by obtaining the various Siddhis. This Atma is the eternally and perpetually free entity that is not under any kind of bondage or fetter, and therefore one need not die in order to attain freedom. Therefore it follows that when one has realised or attained the Atma, when one has become self-realised and has accessed the fount of pure consciousness residing in his own inner-self as his Atma—then he need not strive to obtain any other separate Siddhi or any other separate Mukti as they are attained immediately and simultaneously when one becomes self-realised and attains the knowledge of the Atma. In other words, realisation of the Atma is tantamount to attaining all the Siddhis and all forms of Muktis together.

Such divine and holistic views of the ‘self’ makes the aspirant convinced that he has attained the state of supremacy in this creation; this helps him to avoid pursuing various Siddhis in order to establish his powers and authority in this world. It also eliminates the need to die in order to obtain some exalted abode in the heaven, because for an enlightened man who has become self-realised there is no separate heaven somewhere in the sky but it is located in his inner-self where the Atma resides.

If obtaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, is his ultimate goal for which he does so many things, such as practicing Yoga by which he is gifted with many Siddhis that come naturally as a bonus by doing Yoga etc., then he would be well advised that ‘true and meaningful Mukti’ comes only when the spiritual aspirant or seeker realises his ‘true self’ as the Atma, the pure consciousness. This realisation gives him true Mukti because of the simple fact that the Atma is an ethereal and sublime entity that is never bound, that is eternally free, and that does not need some Siddhi to prove its super-natural powers and authority. The Atma is eternally all-knowing and omniscient; it is eternally powerful and almighty; it is eternally all-pervading and omnipresent; it is eternally truthful and one of its own kind. It has no dual existence, and therefore there is no need to seek a special form that is better and more powerful or more enlightened or more pure than what is it at present. The Atma does not need any special Mukti as such.] (6).

“verse no. 7 = If a person has some kind of desire or hope, he would make relevant efforts and follow corresponding path that would help him fulfill the desire or obtain his goal that he hopes to reach.

On the other hand, if he has no desire or harbours no hope there would be no need to make any effort or follow any path. Such a man is perpetually contented and peaceful. He does not want anything; he does not hanker after some thing or the other (7).

“verse no. 8 = Oh sage (Nidagh)! When one is fully enlightened about the reality of all material things in this world, it is only then that he can see the truth of the Atma. In other words, first he

thinks that the world and its material sense objects are true, but with experience and close examination he finds this is not the case. Then he compares this knowledge of the world with that of the Atma which he has realised by meditation and contemplation. It is then that he discovers the difference, and comes face to face with the ‘truth’ of the Atma vis-à-vis the world and its material things.

[When a wise man analyses the world and its material things, he discovers that they are all illusionary and deluding by nature, and act as traps for the creature’s soul. The world and its things are all gross, perishable and transient; they cannot provide sustainable peace and happiness. The semblance of comfort and pleasure that they do provide is temporary and more entangling than liberating. On the other hand, he finds that the Atma is an eternal and imperishable entity that is sublime and subtle, and the bliss and happiness that comes with its realisation, or experienced when the Atma is realised, is of an eternal and divine nature. While the world is imaginary, the Atma which is pure consciousness is true.]

With this realisation he finds that the world and the various Siddhis (achievements, successes, powers and acclaim) associated with it are futile to pursue, and are best discarded. Only those who are ignorant of the fact yearn for various Siddhis; it is only such people whose mind and sub-conscious have desires for obtaining Siddhis (8).”

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 151-155 classifies all Siddhis into two categories—Kalpit and A-Kalpit. The Kalpit Siddhis are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have imaginable powers and potentials that can be predicted. On the other hand, the A-Kalpit Siddhis are those which are self-generated or uncreated by any artificial means, are natural and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted.

Now let us see what this Upanishad has to say on this subject—
“Canto 1, verse no. 151 = Such an accomplished ascetic becomes Mukta (liberated and delivered) even while he is alive in this world and lives in this physical gross body. [This is because this body becomes irrelevant for him; he has obtained complete control over it so much so that the normal bodily functions such as output of urine, stool, saliva, mucous and sweat etc. have come almost to a standstill—refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no.57-58. This is called ‘Jivan Mukti’.]

Worldly Siddhis (accomplishments, successes and eclectic specialized powers) are of two types—Kalpit and A-Kalpit (151).

{The Kalpit Siddhis are the ones which are created with efforts made for them using various means and methods. They have a limited scope, are perishable, and have predictable and imaginable powers and potentials that can be foreseen. On the other hand, the A-Kalpit Siddhis are those which are self-generated and cannot be created by any artificial means, are natural, and with unimaginable mystical potentials and powers that cannot be predicted.}

“Canto 1, verse no. 152 = The ‘Kalpit Siddhis’ are those that are obtained by diligent efforts and conscious endeavour on the part of the ascetic or any spiritual aspirant. Success in obtaining mystical powers and acquiring spiritual authority in this case of Kalpit Siddhis is done with the help of various juices and essences called the various ‘Rasas’ (such as the Som Rasa used in fire sacrifice as an offering to the Gods and is said to be divinely blessed), the different medicinal herbs called the ‘Aushadhis’ (which are also used in fire sacrifices to clear the environment of toxic gases and germs), all the different deeds called ‘Kriyas’ (which are auspicious, righteous and noble in character and would therefore result in creation of positive energy and right circumstances conducive to one’s all round welfare and well being, here referring to the numerous rituals associated with formal fire sacrifices and other religious activities), and practice of ‘Mantras’ (i.e. doing Japa or repetition with them—this helps to harness the stupendous positive energy encrypted in their letters and words as well as to help the mind to learn

concentration which in turn helps in training it to become calm, quiet, rested and focused on the work at hand, thereby achieving desired results with full attention of the mind's faculties at work) (152).

{These Siddhis are called 'Kalpit' because their powers and potential effects can be predicted and imagined depending upon the medium used to acquire them. Such as for example, if one particular herb is consumed during the course of Yoga, its benefits as well as harms can be well predicted in advance. Similarly, the effects of the Mantras, Kriyas (deeds), and Rasas (juices; extracts) can well be ascertained before hand; they can be predicted with a great degree of accuracy.}

"Canto 1, verse no. 153 = These Kalpit Siddhis are not everlasting; they are transient in their effect, and their mystical powers are less effective and less potent. Some of them can be obtained easily without much hassle and even without employing any special means, while others require some sort of special effort and employment of special means or ways or measures as well as some degree of diligence on the part of the aspirant to be successfully accessed (153).

"Canto 1, verse no. 154 = The A-Kalpit Siddhis, on the contrary, are those whose stupendity, far-reaching mystical powers and grand effects cannot be imagined, pre-conceived, foreseen and predicted in advance. Such Siddhis are the exclusive domain of the Supreme Being called the Ishwar; they are possessed by him and are under his command. Such Siddhis are numerous and of different genres. They are available to (or can be accessed by) an honest and sincere ascetic who is engaged in self realisation with steadfastness of purpose, with persistent consistency and diligence. He is independent of any other props to support his spiritual journey except following the eclectic path of Yoga (meditation and contemplation). That is, he relies on Yoga only for his spiritual emancipation and salvation (154).

{In other words, such an aspirant who sticks to only one path for his spiritual liberation and deliverance, i.e. who follows the path of Yoga as envisioned in this and other Yoga Upanishads, is the only one who can successfully acquire such mystical powers and astounding potentials as the ones that come under the classification of 'A-Kalpit Siddhis'. He therefore would not take the help of any kind of external help in accomplishing his spiritual goal of attaining self-realisation and liberation from the bondage of this gross and perishable body. He would not use medicinal drugs or their spin-offs in the form of various juices and essences such as the Som Rasa used during formal fire sacrifices to keep him going in his spiritual practice and maintain the level of his energy, strength, stamina and vitality, nor does he rely upon so many other ways and paths said to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul as proffered by various versions of different scriptures and their myriad interpretations. He relies only on one eclectic path of Yoga to the exclusion of all others. No one can judge the intensity and reach of his spiritual powers because they are unimaginably great and astounding.}

"Canto 1, verse no. 155 = Such A-Kalpit Siddhis are obtained by acclaimed ascetics by practicing Yoga for a long period of time. Those ascetics who have no Vasanas (worldly passions, yearnings and desires) are the ones who can acquire them, and their acquisition gives them immense strength and powers. They can assume any form they wish. These Siddhis are eternal and everlasting; they are not perishable (155)."

The Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 46-55 enumerates the *benefits* that these great Siddhis or mystical and spiritual powers provide to a practitioner of Yoga. Let us see what this Upanishad has to say—

"Canto 5, verse no. 46 = Oh Sureshwar (the chief amongst Gods, i.e. Brahma)! Now I (Shiva) shall describe the various Siddhis to you. These help the aspirant to obtain true comfort, happiness and joy. By having complete control over the sense organs, by remaining absolutely

calm and serene under all circumstances and provocations, the spiritual aspirant is able to *virtually conquer his Prans* (i.e. he is able to exercise full control over all the functions of his own body, including the external and internal ones) (46).

“Canto 5, verse no. 47 = When an accomplished practitioner is able to focus his mind during Yoga and become completely engrossed in *hearing the Naad* (the cosmic sound heard during deep meditation and contemplation, the sound that reverberates through his entire being and vibrates through his nerves and veins), he is said to acquire the mystical *powers to hear distant sounds not normally heard by the ears*. [That is, he develops the power to hear about things that had occurred in the distant past, are happening in some distant place out of earshot in the present time, and would happen in the future. His brain is so trained because he would not have heard the Naad in the first place if it had not been sufficiently fine-tuned. He develops transcendental powers of perception and deep insight so much so that he can foresee things and happenings in advance, or can have the hindsight long enough to see them occurring long back in time. It also means he can hear voices of the Spirits in heaven, the words of Gods and the Mantras that remain eternally etched in the cosmic ether in the form of sound waves.]

Similarly, when he has focused his mind and concentrated his attention on the Bindu (the dot size spot on the forehead between the two eyebrows where the source of wisdom and enlightenment is said to be located), he is able to *have a deep insight into everything*. [That is, he develops a high degree of practical wisdom and intelligence that pertains to this material world along with the mystical powers and astounding ability to have an insight into the paranormal. These help him to acquire a sight that is beyond the normal sight of the eye, and have a transcendental, super-human power of vision.] (47).

“Canto 5, verse no. 48 = When the Mana (mind) is submerged in the thoughts of the Kalatma (i.e. when he has developed the enlightened view-point that the same pure conscious Atma transcends all the three periods of time such as the past, the present and the future), a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant is able to *become ‘Trikalagya’—i.e. he knows and sees everything in the three phases of time, the past, the present and the future*. [That is, he transcends the borders of time and place, and becomes omniscient and all-knowing.]

Besides this, he acquires the astounding mystical ability of *being able to enter the body and mind of others*. [That is, he can know what others think by being able to read their minds, he can influence their temperament, thoughts and behaviours by controlling their mind along with controlling all their actions and deeds by controlling both their mind as well as their bodies. In other words, he can do things through the medium of the other person; whatever the other person does is actually being done by this specially empowered Yogi.] (48).

“Canto 5, verse no. 49 = When his mind meditates about and experiences the presence of Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) in the head, i.e. when the enlightened ascetic is able to *experience the presence of the supreme transcendental source of eternal bliss and peace known as Brahm* in the region of the Vyom Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra by focusing the attention of his mind and the energy of his vital winds called Pran there, *he is able to vanquish thirst and hunger (for worldly things, sensual pleasures and material comforts) along with overcoming the bad affects of all (spiritual) poisons*. [That is, by becoming Brahm-realised and experiencing its attendant spiritual ecstasy and bliss, the ascetic has nothing more to desire and wants nothing in this material world. The enjoyments and comforts of this material world are transient, artificial and inconsequential as compared to this spiritual high of ecstasy and bliss experienced by Brahm-realisation. He is deemed to have overcome all spiritual hurdles by way of overcoming the numerous faults and imperfections that create uncountable obstacles in his spiritual progress and reaching of the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation.]

When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the earth element and contemplating about it, he *acquires the mystical powers that allow him to take his mind to any corner of the earth, even in beyond it to the nether world called Patal*. [That is, this mystical power empowers him to transcend all physical and geographical barriers that usually impede the reach of an ordinary man, and his mind can go anywhere without any hindrance. He can think of everything that exists on this earth, and his mind can even visualise what is hidden inside the bowls of the earth and beyond it. While living on one part of the earth, he can know what is happening on its other side. This also would imply that nothing in this world would ever influence his mind and captivate it by trapping it in its charm and preventing it from breaking free from its shackles and proceeding ahead.] (49).

“Canto 5, verse no. 50 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the water element and contemplating about it, he has *nothing to fear from the water element*. [That is, he need not fear from any harm being caused to him from water in any form, such as drowning in it or suffering from any water borne disease or some internal medical problems arising out of water such as oedema of lungs, dropsy of tissues and other diseases due to misbalance in the water content of the body.]

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the fire element and contemplating about it, he has *nothing to fear from the fire element*. [That is, he cannot be burnt by fire; his body never has to suffer from lack of vital heat and energy; he never suffers from fever and other diseases due to misbalance in the fire element in Nature. Besides this, his speech acquires all the potent of this element because fire is said to be an integral part of the faculty of speech. He has proper eyesight because again the fire and its light are responsible for the faculty of sight to function properly. He has not to suffer from lack of hunger or digestive problems because the fire is responsible for the proper functioning of both.] (50).

“Canto 5, verse no. 51 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the air or wind element and contemplating about it, he is deemed to have *acquired the ability to move in the sky like birds*. [That is, he becomes so light that he can float in the air; he can levitate and go to any place he likes by surmounting the physical barrier of earth.]

By fixing his mind in the exalted sky element, which is a metaphoric way of saying that by becoming as exalted and sublime as the supreme Brahm himself who has an exalted abode as high as the sky, such a realised and acclaimed ascetic can *acquire such mystical and eclectic powers as Anima etc.* (51).

“Canto 5, verse no. 52 = When a realised and enlightened ascetic’s mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the Viraat (i.e. the Viraat Purush) and contemplating about his stupendous divinity (i.e. when he is submerged in the thoughts of the Supreme Being in his vast, attributeless and invisible but all-pervading, all-encompassing and all-incorporating macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush from whom the rest of the creation has come into being), the ascetic is able to *acquire such great glories and divine virtues called ‘Mahima’ as the ones possessed by the Viraat himself*.

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and submerged in meditating upon the four-headed Brahma (i.e. the creator of the visible creation as well as the four Vedas) and contemplating about his great glories, he *acquires the mystical powers to create the world if he so wishes* (52).

{That is, he now transcends all the limitations of the physical world and even the paranormal world of the Spirits to reach the supreme exalted stature where he acquires such mystical powers as those possessed by Brahm when the latter revealed himself as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush is much senior and more powerful than even the individual gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation, for the simple reason that all of them have been created by this Viraat to carry out specific jobs on his behalf.

The powers of these three Gods are tailor-made to enable them to carry out their respective functions, but the Viraat has all the powers of these three Gods vested in him, because the Viraat is the supreme Authority who delegates these powers to these Gods in the first place, and anyone who does not possess any power cannot delegate it to someone else. According to the Vedantic view of creation, the Viraat is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm in the subtlest and the most sublime form. Brahm first metamorphosed itself into the Hiranyagarbha, the subtle body of creation, and the latter evolved into the Viraat. The entire creation has come into being from the body of this Viraat. So the latter incorporates the entire creation in its form. In other words, the Viraat is the sum total of all the gross bodies of all the individual creatures in creation. By extension, the ascetic who has acquired the stature which makes him one like the Viraat becomes very near to Brahm and acquires the enviable exalted stature of being superior to even the Gods because this Viraat is superior to all the Gods put together. }

“Canto 5, verse no. 53 = When the ascetic fixes the attention of his Atma (his conscious self) on Indra, the king of Gods and a metaphor for sense gratification and indulgence in worldly material comforts and pleasures derived from the sense objects in this world, he *obtains the greatest material comforts and pleasures that the world of sense objects can ever hope to provide anyone*.

Similarly, if he fixes the attention of his Atma on Vishnu, the sustainer, care taker and protector of the world, he would *acquire mystical powers to sustain, take care and protect the world*. [That is, with this mystical power he can well look after his dependants and his subjects. He becomes a kingly figure because this is the basic function of any good king—to sustain, protect and look after the general welfare of his subjects.] (53).

{This is because ‘Indra’ is a metaphor for all things sensual and the natural tendency of the mind to remain engrossed in enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of the world with the sense organs. The word ‘Indra’ is derived from the word ‘Indris’ meaning the sense organs of the body. These sense organs have an inherent and natural inclination to be attracted towards the world and its material objects, and then derive comfort and pleasure from them. They would naturally swerve towards them and find a natural habitat in them. It is a Herculean task to pull them away from their natural habitat just like it is almost impossible to pull a man out of his own house and forcing him to disown it. So, if the ascetic remains engrossed in thinking about the material comforts of the world, he would strive whole-heartedly get them. This verse has a double meaning—on the one hand it is a sarcastic comment on those stupid ascetics who suffer great difficulties in first acquiring mystical powers and then frittering them away by using them to pursue and obtain such low-value and despicable objects as the material comforts of the world and personal glorification inspite of knowing that they are transient and perishable and would be demeaning for their soul, and on the other hand warning those who are newcomers in the spiritual field and are yet unaware of how to use the mystical powers once they are accessed by being successful in Yoga. The fruits of Yoga are emancipation and salvation for the soul, and not indulgences in the world and being captive of the sense organs need for constant and infinite gratification. }

“Canto 5, verse no. 54 = When the ascetic thinks of Rudra (the angry form of Lord Shiva) while meditating and fixes his mind and attention on his virtues (which are fiery in nature and consume the world in the fire of anger), he is able to *acquire such great fiery powers that would enable him to annihilate the world if he so wishes just like Lord Rudra himself*.

Likewise, if he meditates upon Lord Narayan (Vishnu), he becomes one like him and *acquires mystical powers possessed by Lord Narayan*. And if he meditates upon Lord Vasudeo (another name of Vishnu who is regarded as the Lord of the eight Vasus, the important entities created by the creator for the welfare of the creation when it came into existence in the beginning, such as material wealth without which life in this world would be difficult to sustain), he is able to acquire all the eight Siddhis (i.e. he is able to acquire lordship over all these eight Vasus, and

therefore over all the vital components of creation that help to sustain the creatures in this material world).

[In other words, an ascetic would acquire the virtues of the entity upon which he meditates. If his idol of adoration is something as horrible as anger, if his mind is always restless and agitated, if he is always full of jealousy and ill will towards others, if he is always thinking of violence, cruelty and spite, then he would acquire these lowly virtues because one becomes what one constantly thinks about. This is indicated by the word 'Rudra'. On the contrary, if he thinks and contemplates about nobler things and higher virtues of life such as the emancipation and salvation of the spirit, he would acquire those eclectic virtues as the ones personified by Lord Narayan. And if he is more concerned with the care, upkeep and general welfare of his dependants and subjects, he would be always thinking in the term of providing enough for their comfort and wellbeing so that they do not have to face dearth of any material necessities of life, and this is metaphorically depicted by saying that he would acquire the virtues of Vasudeo or would become as exalted and empowered as Vasudeo.] (54).

{These *Vasus* are the various patron Gods who preside over the essentials of life; they are eight in number—Vishnu is the sustainer, Shiva who is the annihilator, Kuber who is the treasurer of the wealth of the Gods, the Sun, Water, Fire, Wealth represented by gems and gold, and 'Ray' representing glory and fame. The element 'Fire' is the most potent, prominent and essential force in creation, because without fire the world would freeze to death. Hence, the Fire-God is said to be the chief amongst the Vasus. The 'fire' element is the active force in creation and is primarily responsible for kindling the cosmic cauldron that set in motion the process, and once having set it in motion it then sustained it and would finally annihilate it by burning it to cinders. On the other hand, Lord Vishnu is the passive force of creation represented by his other form of Viraat Purush which is the primary male aspect of creation. Lord Vishnu, who is the sustainer of the creation, is the Lord of Laxmi who is the Goddess of wealth, and is the supreme creator because Brahma, the old patriarch of creation who created the visible world and its creatures, was himself born atop the divine lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu utilizes the services of Laxmi who is the personification of the active forces of creation to create, sustain and annihilate the world. The Vasus are symbolic Gods who represent those essentials aspects of creation without which life would be difficult to conceive and sustain and finally conclude.

The eight Vasus are the patron Gods who provide succour and a dwelling place for the whole creation. They symbolise those primary necessities of life without which existence is not possible. They are— (i) Kuber (the God of wealth and prosperity), (ii) the Sun God (who provides energy and food) and his rays and radiance (i.e. sunlight and the energy that it provides), (iii) Shiva (the concluder or annihilator of the creation), (iv) Vishnu (the sustainer), (v) the Water God (called Varun), (vi) the Fire God (called Agni), (vii) any body of water such as a pond, a river etc., and (viii) holy and pious people (who give advice and guidance to the creatures of the creation). According to Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 3/9/3, the Vasus are the following—Fire, Earth, Air, Antariksha (the space of the solar system), Aditya (Sun), Duloka (heavens), the Moon, and the Nakshatras (the stars and the planets).

According to Purans, the eight Vasus are the following-- Dhruv, Dhar, Som (the sap of an elixir-providing plant called Som which is used during religious ceremonies as sanctified liquid offered to the Gods), Aapha (water), Anil (wind), Anal (fire), Pratush and Prabhas.

These eight Vasus are the semi-Gods who symbolise the various types of assets needed to sustain this world. They therefore represent such assets as jewels, precious stones and gems, gold and other forms of wealth and property. Vasus also refers to the fire and water elements as well as their grosser forms as the terrestrial fire and water bodies such as ponds and lakes; to the virtue of radiance, splendour and glory; to the ray of light; to Kuber (the treasurer of Gods), Shiva, Sun, Vishnu, and a simple and pious gentleman.

Lord Vishnu has one of his names as Vasudeo because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his undisputed lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the

Vasus of which there are eight in number, created at the beginning of creation to help sustain the upcoming creation.}

“Canto 5, verse no. 55 = An ascetic who is not only well-versed with the real meaning and intent of the various tenets of Yoga in their literal sense but is also an expert exponent of them in practice, being a personification of Yoga itself, who is self restraint and practices the various principles of Yoga in their entirety, is able to achieve fulfillment of all his wishes. Success in any endeavour depends upon one’s sincerity of purpose, commitment and diligence, and this applies to Yoga as well (55).”

The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 23-24 assert that an ascetic who do meditation and worship of Lord Shiva are eligible to obtain the various Siddhis such as ‘Anima’ etc. To quote—“Those wise ones who symbolically pour a stream of this elixir on the divine deity called Mahadeva (literally the ‘great God’ or Lord Shiva), located in the region of the navel and whose form is like a lighted lamp, while doing Japa with the Mantra ‘Hans-Hans’¹ are blessed with being free from various diseases such as the degenerating effects of old age culminating into death. [That is, such a man acquires robust health and maintains it even in his old age; he dies peacefully without having to undergo the usual torments associated with old age and death.]

He is also becomes eligible to acquire the various mystical powers called Siddhis such as Anima etc. [That is, he acquires special powers by preserving his vital energy, stamina and vitality.] (23-24).

The Siddhis are meant to be kept secret—The Yogtattva Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 76-78 clearly asserts that a wise ascetic should not allow the successful accomplishment of the Siddhis to go into his head and make him proud and arrogant. He should keep them secret and not divulge them to anyone, because the people with selfish interests would surround him seeking his intervention to help them with their worldly problems, but this would cause unnecessary obstacle in the path of the ascetic’s spiritual progress.

²The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three celebrated primary qualities called the Gunas. They are Sata, Raja and Tama.

(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who posses it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally

having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the 'bad Vasanas' or better still the 'worst type of Vasana' that any individual can have.

These Gunas, in varying ratios and mixtures, decide the character and personality of any given unit of creation. In modern world we recognize them as the 'gene' special to that individual, the 'gene' which makes each individual so unique in this creation. These Gunas can also be compared to the various shades and hues of colours that a painter uses to paint a picture or a portrait and inject life and uniqueness to it. Even the same painter cannot duplicate exactly a picture again—there is bound to be a difference between any two pictures or portraits no matter how invisible, imperceptible, microscopic and subtle it might be.

The *effect* of the Gunas and *how they affect this creation* have been explained in a number of Upanishads. For instance, in the Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 2 of the Atharva Veda the Lord Ram himself explains them. "The Lord himself is the one who is the cause of the creation coming into existence; he is the one who sustains and protects it; he is the one who finally concludes it. Towards this end, he willingly utilises the three basic qualities called the Gunas that act as catalysts to give effect to the Lord's wishes. These three Gunas help to bring about a particular change in creation, and modify the existing equilibrium in accordance with the wishes of the Lord.

These three Gunas are the following—Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The dominance of the first quality called Sata Guna results in the emergence or retrieval of this present creation from the darkness that had prevailed after the previous phase of creation was annihilated. The dominance of the second quality called Raja Guna is responsible for the growth, the development, the sustenance and protection of creation that has come into existence. And finally, the third quality of Tama Guna brings about the conclusion of the existing creation.

Just like a huge banyan tree is secretly and imperceptibly present in its seed, only to emerge when the situation is conducive for its birth, this entire creation is secretly present in the

supreme Lord and waiting for the right conditions that would cause it to emerge into a vibrant world. And this 'right condition' is created when the Sata Guna becomes a dominant factor. (2)."]

दो०. माया ईस न आपु कहूँ जान कहिअ सो जीव ।

बंध मोच्छ प्रद सर्वपर माया प्रेरक सीव ॥ १५ ॥

dōhā.

māyā īsa na āpu kahum' jāna kahi'a sō jīva.

bandha mōccha prada sarbapara māyā prēraka sīva. 15.

He who does not understand what is Maya, who is Ishwar, and what is the truthful form of his own 'self'—such a creature is known as a 'Jiva'.¹

The Authority that decides the destiny of the creature depending upon the latter's deeds, whether the creature should be liberated and delivered or allowed to remain entangled in this world of birth and death, the Authority that is supreme and transcendental, and the one that inspires Maya to act—it is the divine entity that is known as 'Ishwar'.² (Doha no. 15)

[Note—¹When a creature is not enlightened about the fact that this world and its material temptations are creations of Maya or delusions, that this Maya is a creation of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness which has revealed itself in the form of this world using the powers of delusions created by its own free will, and that the truthful identity of all living beings is known as the Atma which is pure consciousness like the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, being a microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic aspect of super Consciousness—then such a creature is known as the Jiva.

Obviously, there appears to be a separation of the Jiva from the Ishwar when the creature gets deluded into thinking that the gross visible body in which the Atma lives is the identity of a living being. Since all such bodies have separate existence, since one is clearly distinct from another, each body having its peculiar characters and personality, this creates an impression that the holder of these bodies have independent existence, and that such entities are distinct from the supreme entity known as the Ishwar because the latter is universal and omnipresent. This thinking is basically flawed because the gross physical body is not the true identity of the living being; the true identity is the Atma or the pure conscious soul. This individual consciousness is the same as the cosmic Consciousness, the only difference being in the plane or level of existence.

Since the 'consciousness' is an immutable and sublime entity, it simply cannot be fractured into so many parts as exists in this world.

Besides this, anything that is really 'true' must be eternal, infinite, steady, constant, permanent and imperishable. Both the world created by Maya, as well as the body of the creature, lack these grand qualities. So they definitely cannot be the 'real truth'.

The scriptures, especially the eclectic Upanishads, repeatedly stress that this world is a manifestation of Brahm, and since Brahm is a single non-dual entity it follows that all its revelations are basically the same as they all have the same element at their core. For instance, countless images of a single object can be formed in as many mirrors, and a person who is not aware of the existence of the primary object will think in his ignorance that there are so many things. He gets deluded when he counts them, and this misconception may spread further when someone else asks him as to how many things he had seen. In his belief that he is speaking the truth he says he saw the number of things that he counted by the virtue of the images he saw in the mirror. Then a wise man tells him about his folly; he enlightens him that what he saw was

merely images, and not the real thing. The real tally of things present is only 'one', and the rest is nothing but an illusion.

The same thing applies in the case of Maya, Ishwar and Jiva. It is under the influence of Maya that an ignorant person begins to see a separation between the Ishwar and the Jiva. Actually no such difference, separation or distinction exists between the Ishwar and the Jiva.

Difference between Jivatma and Parmatma—This has been explained in Atharva Veda's Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4 as follows—"The four states in which a Jiva (living being) exists are the following—Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya. The fifth state called the Turiyatit state is beyond these four.

In other words, the same Atma appears to exist in four different forms depending upon these four states of a creature's conscious existence. Hence, the Atma that lives in the Jagrat state is called 'Vishwa', in the Swapna state it is called 'Taijas', in the Sushupta state it is called 'Pragya', and in the Turiya state it is called 'Tathastha' (literally meaning non-involved, indifferent and completely neutral). The Atma or consciousness that exists beyond these four states, the Atma which exists in the transcendental state called Turiyatit, is known as the 'Parmatma'—or the supreme Atma or the transcendental Consciousness. Since it is in 'transcendental' state of existence which goes beyond all the known states of worldly existence, it is natural that it rises above the gross and the mundane, and instead remains free from all the faults and shortcomings that are associated with worldly existence—i.e. the Parmatma is immaculate and devoid of all taints and corruptions that might have shrouded the Atma when it assumes a gross body while it lives in this world. [This is the reason why the Parmatma is compared to the sky because the sky stays above the gross world known as the earth and does not have any of the physical limitations of the earth.]

Again, since the wise ascetic has already realised that his true 'self' is the Atma that lives in the Turiyatit state of existence, it is obvious that he is like this Parmatma. So he exclaims upon this eclectic discovery—"I am Brahm (the Parmatma)!"

A person who lives perpetually in this Turiyatit state is deemed to be free from the limitations imposed by the other four states of existence. It may be argued that this Turiyatit state incorporates all the other four states of existence, but in actual practice it is perpetually a completely neutral state, and anything that is profoundly and eternally neutral cannot be said to have bias towards any one or the other thing. Since there is no reversal of this state of Turiyatit, i.e. once a man reaches this transcendental state of existence he would not go back to the other four states of existence, he would not be aware of the gross world and his gross organs as done in the Jagrat state, he would not dream as in the Swapna state, he would not be in the temporary state of rest in the Sushupta state which is a transient state as the creature oscillates between the Sushupta and Swapna states while asleep, and he would not even have any junior level of spiritual evolvment as exemplified by the Turiya state which is higher than the Sushupta state but lower than the Turiyatit state. This is because he has reached the highest point in his spiritual journey and has reached its pinnacle or citadel. There is no existence beyond it; it is the supreme state in which the consciousness can ever expect to exist. Hence, it is honoured by the epithet 'Param'—one that is supreme and beyond which there is nothing.

Since the eternal and truthful Atma (here referring the cosmic transcendental form of the Atma known as Consciousness, rather than the microcosmic form of the Atma that lives inside the body of the individual creature as its Jiva-Atma) is the only conscious and living entity that exists in all of these states of existence, it is deemed to be the only one witness of their presence.

[The gross body ceases to exist in the other states except the Jagrat state. The subtle body consisting of the mind ceases to exist in the Sushupta state. The causal body that harbours the individual's Atma ceases to exist when the creature dies and leaves the gross body. So, none of them are eternal. The Atma itself, though it is eternal and immaculate by nature, becomes mired in the delusions of the world, allows itself to be trapped in the web-like snare created out of its

own free will, then remains engrossed in doing so many deeds and suffering from their consequences, has various desires and assumes so many roles voluntarily. Hence, it is also not apparently steady. In other words, the Atma that is called a 'Jiva Atma' is influenced by the environment in which it lives; it is tainted by its surroundings. As compared to this situation, the Parmatma is unaffected by worldly things and is beyond the reach or influence of anything gross and mundane that pertains to this creation, whether it is good or bad. Hence, in this scenario, the only entity that remains constant and unchanging is the Parmatma, the supreme form of the individual Atma which is also known as Brahm. That is also why the latter is called the Absolute Truth—because the latter does not change.

A simple illustration will help to clear the idea. The celestial sun is unmoving and shining brilliantly in a uniform manner. But when seen from earth, it appears to move and even change its brilliance depending upon a number of environmental factors such as the presence of clouds, humidity, dust particles etc. in the atmosphere, etc. The sun also appears to rise and set, is hidden from view behind dark clouds, or even disappears during solar eclipses. But even a high school student knows that none of this is true. Similarly, the disc of the moon appears to have its own light whereas it merely reflects the light of the sun, and it also appears to change its contours every night though this is due to the different angles from which it is viewed from earth every night as a result of its revolution around the earth. The same argument applies to the Parmatma vis-à-vis the Jiva Atma. The Parmatma is like the sun, and the Jiva Atma is like the moon that shines in the light of the sun.]

Since the Parmatma represents that superior aspect of the cosmic Consciousness that is absolutely neutral and detached from everything, including Maya (delusions), it is beyond the purview of the four normal states of conscious existence of a creature. The Atma living in the Turiyatit state is called a Parmatma. In this state, it cannot be called a 'Drasta' of anything, or the one who sees anything, observes anything, or is a witness to anything—because this is a completely neutral and detached state of existence in which the mind and all the other faculties are defunct, and in which nothing matters for the super-conscious Atma.

In such a case, should one regard the Jiva (the living being) as the Drasta? [That is, if the Parmatma is not the Drasta or the one who sees, observes and witnesses anything because of its sublime cosmic existence and neutral character, then can one treat the creature that has a gross existence in a visible world of material sense objects as the seer, observer and witness?]

No, the Jiva (living being) is also not the Drasta in the true sense because his 'true self' is the Atma that is a most subtle and sublime entity which is really not involved in anything related to the gross body as well as the gross world. This Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma (which is the 'supreme Atma' or the cosmic Consciousness which is the macrocosmic form of the individual creature's Atma). The Atma possesses all the virtues of the Parmatma in the sense that it is equally neutral, dispassionate, detached etc. from anything gross and untrue. The problem arises only when the creature, under the influence of delusions and ignorance, begins to identify himself with the gross body in which this Atma lives and erroneously begins to treat this body as his 'true self and identity'. This body lives and interacts with the gross material world of sense objects.

So, when the creature begins to identify himself with the body, he becomes a 'Drasta' because then he begins to 'see and perceive' this world through the organs of perception of the body. Now he becomes someone who 'sees', someone who perceives, feels, tastes, touches, smells etc. The world becomes his object of perception or the 'Drisya'. The Drasta (the seer or observer) is affected naturally by the Drisya (the objects or things seen or observed). The sight influences him and creates either a positive or a negative impression on his sub-conscious and psyche. Such a creature cannot remain immune from, unaffected by or indifferent to his surroundings and what he 'sees' simply because his mind and intellect are not attuned to see the 'truth'. Had they been so, the creature would have realised that the body—which actually does the seeing or perceiving of the objects of the world—is not his truthful identity at all in the first

place. The fact that he has not realised what his true nature is becomes the breeding ground for illusions of his being a 'Drasta' or the seer. Such a 'Drasta' gets embroiled in the affairs of the gross world because he 'sees' this world as being true—though this perception is absolutely erroneous.

On the other hand is the person who can be regarded as a 'neutral Drasta or a non-Drasta'. This wise man knows that his 'true form' is not the body but the Atma that lives in this body. Such a wise and erudite man would do things in this world like another 'ordinary' man, but with the difference that he does not get involved in anything the body does at the emotional and sub-conscious level. His mind neither gets involved in what his body does, nor does it register or stores any information in its memory bank regarding the humdrum affairs of the world.

Therefore it is derived that the same Jiva Atma (a living being) can either be a 'Drasta' or a 'non-Drasta' depending upon the level of its wisdom and intellectual development in the spiritual sphere. That is, everything depends on the level in which a living being's Atma or pure consciousness exists in this world. In other words, at the lower level and grosser level of existence of the consciousness, the Jiva becomes a 'Drasta', while at the higher level of existence he is a 'non-Drasta'. A Drasta is involved in and influenced by the world, while the non-Drasta is uninvolved and neutral.

In other words, if the Atma relates itself to the world—whether at the gross level corresponding to the Jagrat state known as the waking state of consciousness in the physical world, or at the lower subtle level corresponding to the Swapna state known as the dreaming state of consciousness in the world of dreams—then this Atma is known as the 'Drasta'. But when the same Atma lives in the Turiya state of consciousness that transcends these levels of existence of consciousness—when it is completely detached from the world, the physical body and the subtle mind—then it is known as the 'non-Drasta'.]

Now suppose it is said that the Jiva's (living being's) true nature is not to remain involved in worldly affairs as his 'true form' is the Atma which is pure consciousness that is equivalent to the cosmic Consciousness called the Parmatma, then this logic also does not hold its ground of validity. This is because as soon as the Atma assumes a gross body, it is immediately shrouded by the ego and pride of having a body. It is almost impossible to find a living being or a Jiva who would not accept that he has a body. In fact, the very concept of being a 'Jiva' rests on the premise that the Atma has a body. Therefore, if this notion of being a possessor of a body is done away with, it is only then that the Jiva becomes equivalent to the Parmatma. [The Atma is proud of the body because this body gives the Atma its form, its identity as an individual; it is by the medium of the gross body that the Atma is able to perform stupendous tasks in this world, achieves success in various fields and acquire name and fame; it is the body which helps the Atma to do deeds that are righteous, noble, auspicious and holy. The Atma is only a Spirit without a form, and to be identified it needs a physical form which the body provides. Hence, the Atma is proud of its association with the body. This stokes the ego and makes the Atma possessive of the body.]

In other words, the *difference between a Jiva and the Parmatma* is just like the difference between the Ghatakash and the Mahakash. [The Ghatakash is the space present inside a hollow pitcher, and the Mahakash is the vast open sky outside the vessel. The Ghatakash is separated from the Mahakash by the physical body of the pitcher. Actually there is no distinction between the space inside and outside the pitcher, for if the vessel is broken the two spaces coalesce instantly and effortlessly.] The two names of the same thing are given only in an abstract manner for the purpose of study, for in actuality there is no difference. So therefore, a Jiva has a distinct existence only as long as it has the body—or is conscious that it has the body, and as soon as this awareness of the body is removed, the two—the Jiva and the Parmatma—become one.

[Another instance is cited now.] The same breath moves out and in the body as exhalation and inhalation. While doing so, it makes two distinct sounds—'Ha' and 'Sa' respectively. That is, while moving out the sound is equivalent to the letter 'Ha' of the Sanskrit language, and when

moving in the sound is equivalent to the letter 'Sa'. This forms the Mantra 'Hans', meaning a divine Swan. In other words, the Jiva's Pran or vital winds also display artificial distinction as being exhaled breath and inhaled breath though the air is the same entity that cannot be distinguished and mutated. A wise, self-realised and enlightened ascetic understands the esoteric message encrypted in this sound of Hans. He realises that the breath is telling him that he is like the divine bird Swan which is regarded as the purest and the wisest amongst the birds². So, a wise ascetic always concentrates upon his pure and enlightened form known as the Atma that has no physical body like this wind or air element which too has no physical body. The Atma then becomes equivalent to the Parmatma.

With this sublime and eclectic spiritual view firmly established in his inner self, the enlightened ascetic discards all sense of ego and pride vis-à-vis the body. And when this happens, he becomes one with the Parmatma (as explained above) (4).

{¹The word 'Drasta' means one who sees, observes something. It is the mind that registers any sight that is seen, or any other perception for that matter, in order to enable the man to actually see or perceive the particular thing. For instance, a man might be gazing at something continuously but he might not be actually seeing it because his mind is lost in some other thoughts. In the present case when we refer to an ascetic in the Turiyatit state of existence we find that he is so much absorbed in meditation and reflection upon the truth of the Atma, his pure consciousness, and remains submerged in its thoughts and the bliss derived from it that he is totally oblivious about the surroundings. So he lives in a perpetual trance, and though he might beg for food or take a bath in the river, actually, at the mental level, he is not doing anything at all. If one asks him anything about his actions, his answer naturally would be in the negative, and in this he would be speaking the actual and sincere truth.

This also explains the difference between the Turiya and the Turiyatit states. The living being who has vestiges of awareness left in him, even of the fact that he is an ascetic or a Sanyasi, or the fact that he is enlightened and wise, may have risen above the rest of the creatures and live in a Turiya state of trance-like existence that resembles Turiyatit state, but he has not achieved truthful success. That comes when he reaches the Turiyatit state of complete unawareness and neutrality—or a state of 'non-knowledge'. Obviously, a man who has no true knowledge of anything would not be able to see or hear or feel or taste or smell anything, simply because he does not know what these things mean or from where they originate or how to perceive them or distinguish between any two of them. This state is the truthful Turiyatit state. The Atma that lives in this eclectic transcendental state is the superior Atma called the 'Parmatma'. It is exemplarily neutral and dispassionate. It does not see and bear witness to any thing or event. It is not concerned with anything. Hence it is called a non-Drasta—one who does not see.}

The eclectic concept of non-duality between the Jiva and Ishwar is explained in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47, and (ii) Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77.

The Krishna Yajur Veda's Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47 elucidates about the non-duality between the Jiva and Ishwar or Brahm as follows—

“verse no. 41 = [Verse nos. 41-45 espouse the philosophy of uniformity and non-duality of the soul, the philosophy central to Advaita Vedanta. It establishes why and how there is no difference between the Jiva, the living being, and Ishwar, the Supreme Being.]

In this tree represented by the creature's body, two birds live. One is the Jiva (the individual), and the other is the Ishwar (the supreme Lord). Out of these two, the Jiva enjoys and suffers from the consequences of the deeds done, while the Ishwar remains a neutral spectator or witness to that deed. [The Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 6-7 uses this example of two birds to beautifully describe the relationship between the creature and the supreme Brahm. The metaphor of the tree is also used magnificently to describe this creation in Katha/Kathvalli Upanishad, Canto 2, Valli 3. Both these two Upanishads are part of this volume.] (41).

{The Jiva refers to that aspect of consciousness that makes the creature think that it is the 'doer' of deeds, and therefore is liable for its results, both good and bad. Such a deluded individual thinks that the body is his 'self' and therefore what the body does is being done by 'him'. Such a person would naturally be affected by what is produced by the deed done because all actions have a reaction, and since he regards himself as the doer he must face the results as well.

On the other end of the thinking process is the eclectic view that the 'self' is not the body but the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and this Atma is separate from the body and it does not have anything to do with the deeds done by the body because the Atma is merely a temporary resident of the body. Besides this point, there is an element called 'conscience' in all individuals which tells them what is good and what is not. This conscience is the voice of the Atma inasmuch as it always tells the person about things which are righteous and auspicious and noble. Whenever the man indulges in worldly things or sinful acts, this conscience would warn him, even though for a fleeting moment, that the path he has chosen is not going to be conducive for his long-term good. This voice of the Atma, so-called, is the voice of the Ishwar referred to here in this verse. In other words, the consciousness revealing itself as the conscience is the Ishwar.

There is a very fine and almost imperceptible difference between the terms Ishwar and Brahm. While the word Ishwar generally refers to the supreme Lord of creation worshipped as a God by his devotees, the term refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is the 'soul' of this Ishwar. This 'supreme, cosmic Consciousness' is called Brahm; it is the ultimate Truth and the quintessence of everything of any worth in existence. In the individual creature this Brahm resides as his own 'self' or Atma. Therefore, Brahm is Ishwar because the former is the Lord of creation, and Ishwar is Brahm because it is Consciousness personified in its macrocosmic revelation. Practically, they can be used synonymously.

Since the Atma is a manifestation of Brahm and the sovereign residing inside the body of the individual, it is also called the Ishwar residing inside the heart or the inner self of the creature. This view is proved by the fact that the sublime and subtle Atma shows characteristics special to Brahm, the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, such as its eternity, imperishability, self-illumination, wisdom, enlightenment, all-pervading and all-knowing abilities etc.—qualities that the gross body lacks.

Therefore, this 'Ishwar', the resident Supreme Being or Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma, does not do anything and remains neutral towards the deeds done by the 'Jiva', the individual who thinks that the body is his 'self'. Thus, the former (Ishwar) is merely a witness to the deeds while the latter (Jiva) is neck-deep in them.

It would be noted that the difference between the Jiva and the Ishwar lies in the level of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom by which things are perceived by the individual person. An ordinary man thinks that he is known as an individual because of the body, that the body is his 'self' and identity, and therefore he is subjected to all the characteristic features and qualities associated with the body—i.e. that he would die, that he takes a birth, that he suffers from this and that, that he does deeds and therefore must either enjoy the rewards of these deeds or suffer from their consequences, that this world and its enchantments are real, are meant for him and therefore must be enjoyed, and so on and so forth.

On the other end of the spectrum is the enlightened view that one's true identity is not the body but the soul or the pure conscious Atma which is the ethereal spirit that is imperishable and eternal, that this spirit neither takes a birth nor dies, that it is uniform and stable under all circumstances, and therefore it neither gets agitated or excited, nor depressed and dejected by circumstances or as the result of deeds, that it is untainted, untarnished and pristine pure, and therefore not affected by the various faults associated with this murky world which can only influence the external body and not its resident Atma, and so on and so forth.

The body is regarded as a tree on which both these birds live to indicate that the same body can lead to spiritual entrapment for one person while providing emancipation and salvation

to another. The same body is used by a pervert man to commit horrendous sins and torment others no end, and a holy person uses the body to alleviate their sufferings and serve humanity selflessly. The same body can be a snare trapping the Atma, and it can also be a means of its liberation and deliverance. If a man gets involved with the world and uses his body as a means to gratify himself, he would be shackled to it, while if he uses it to study the scriptures and perform righteous deeds in an auspicious manner without getting involved in them and their results, he would be using the body to achieve liberation and deliverance. Even Yoga Upanishads emphasise the fact that meditation and contemplation is an important instrument by which the Atma can find its liberation, called 'Kaivalya Mukti' by doing various Yoga exercises, and these can only be done with the help of the body. So, in brief, it is the way one handles anything that is of greater importance rather than the thing itself.}

“verse no. 42 = The Maheshwar (the great Lord; the truthful ‘self’ representing Brahm; the Atma as a representative of Brahm) does not enjoy or suffer from the consequences of deeds done by the Jiva. The former is merely a witness of everything. [That is, the sublime Atma does not have to suffer from what the gross body does. It just watches silently in a dispassionate way the deeds of the body.]

In fact, the difference between the Jiva and Brahm is artificial and is created by Maya—i.e. by ignorance-incited delusions about one’s true nature and essence. This knowledge itself is like an illumination that can remove this dark shadow of Maya (42).

{That is, basically there is no difference between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm because the true identity of the individual is his eternal and enlightened Atma, the pure consciousness or soul residing in his gross body, and not the external perishable body that is gross, inert and inane to the extreme. This Atma of the individual creature is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma that is the essence and the principal entity of creation known as Consciousness, and therefore both are the same. What pervades in the entire creation also pervades in one’s own body; what gives life to the rest of the creation also gives life to the individual creature. This is the considered eclectic non-dual view of the Upanishads. It is out of ignorance of the fact that the creature thinks that the supreme Lord is somewhere else in the heaven and has to be sought outside his own self. It is out of ignorance of the Truth about one’s true ‘self’ that a creature thinks that he is a Jiva, a living being with a gross body, who is different and separate from Maheshwar, the great Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation. This delusion and false conception is the result of Maya.

Once the creature becomes enlightened and wisened of this fact, once he realises that the difference between himself and Brahm is artificial and illusionary because his ‘true self’ is not the gross body but the ethereal cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma that is universal and uniform everywhere in creation, and that his own Atma is a microcosm of the omnipresent cosmic Atma that uniformly pervades in each form and each unit in creation, he immediately begins to see that there is no fundamental difference between his ‘true self’ and the supreme ‘Self’ of creation.

Hence, this knowledge that the dichotomy created between the Jiva and the Ishwar is an artificial creation of Maya is an awareness that would immediately lift the veil of delusions created by ignorance of the ‘truth and reality’. It is like the illumination provided by the light of a candle of knowledge that cuts through the darkness of ignorance and the attendant phantoms and ghosts stalking the creature and horrifying him no end.}

“verse no. 43 = Just like the Ghatakash and Mathakash (the space present inside a hollow pot, and the space inside the building of a monastery respectively) are imaginary and artificial segregations or partitions of the same Akash (the sky and its infinite stretch of space) which is fundamentally immutable, indivisible, uniform and universally all-pervading and all-encompassing by nature, the Supreme Being known as Brahm too is imagined to have two

separate existences as Ishwar and Jiva. In fact, this artificial and imaginary distinction between the two manifestations of the same non-dual and immutable Supreme Being (Brahm) as the Ishwar and Jiva is due to ignorance about the truth and reality (43).

{This is because both the Jiva and Ishwar are two sides of the same coin—one is at the gross and micro level of creation, and the other is at the sublime and macro level of creation, inspite of the fact that both have the same consciousness living inside them. That is, whereas Ishwar is the all-powerful, ethereal, macrocosmic, all-pervading and all-encompassing gross body of Brahm which has no physical barriers, the Jiva is the microcosmic gross body of the same Brahm as the individual creature with limitations of the gross body. The Ishwar is the nearest analogue to Brahm inasmuch as it is eternal, infinite, sublime, subtle, invisible, macrocosmic, universal and all-pervading in Nature, while the Jiva is mortal, gross and limited to his gross body. Both have the pure consciousness known as the soul or the Atma central to their existence. In the case of Ishwar, it is ‘cosmic Consciousness’, and in the case of the Jiva it is ‘individual consciousness’. So the difference between the duo—the Jiva and Ishwar—is only based on an erroneous perception of the truth. Once the correct perception is taken into consideration, the dichotomy vanishes—and this is called enlightenment and self-realisation. That is, if the ‘truthful’ identity of both is ‘consciousness’ and this consciousness is Brahm, then it follows that Jiva and Ishwar are the same. In other words, a self-realised individual who has known his true self is like an Ishwar personified.}

“verse no. 44 = In fact, the consciousness personified as the Atma is nothing but Shiva (the auspicious beautiful Truth itself) personified. It is the level of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment that whether or not one distinguishes between a Jiva and Ishwar; actually there is no basic difference between them. [This is because the Jiva has a predominance of delusions and ignorance in it making it unaware of its glorious and divine true ‘self’, whereas Ishwar is the pinnacle of wisdom and enlightenment who knows this fact. Therefore, if the Jiva also becomes wise and enlightened then he would too become one like Ishwar. In this context, refer verse no. 42.]

If there was a real difference between them then their basic conscious nature would be compromised with. [Since a living being has consciousness in it, it is not inanimate like rock or tree, and therefore it is different from the inanimate forms of life in this creation. The difference between a Jiva and a tree has been explained by sage Yagyavalkya in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 28/1-7. But a lowly fallen man is not different from those who are wise, enlightened and noble except for the degree of these auspicious virtues possessed by them. Both have the same body showing the same functions, both take a birth and die, both reproduce and eat and drink, but here the similarity ends. The mental and intellectual setups of both are as varied as the sky and the earth. It is the level of erudition and wisdom or Gyan that decides whether a person treats himself as a Jiva or as Brahm personified as his Atma or pure conscious ‘self’.] (44).

“verse no. 45 = The apparent difference between the two categories of consciousness present in the Jiva and the Ishwar is dependent upon the level of their Gyan, i.e. their spiritual awakening, wisdom, enlightenment and conscience factor. The difference is due to the dominance of gross negative values in the former, and the sublime and noble values in the latter. So to say that ‘the pure consciousness’ has two types of existences—one as a Jiva and the other as Ishwar—is imaginary and due to ignorance of the absolute reality and quintessential truth about consciousness. And this truth is the fact that the ‘consciousness’ in reality is a uniform, universal, immutable, non-divisible and non-dual entity. Therefore the apparent dichotomy is due to the veil of ignorance about its immaculate pristine pure nature that surrounds the creature like a dark cloud of ignorance and delusions, leading it to believe that the Jiva (the ‘true self’ of the living being as his pure consciousness known as the Atma) is separate from the supreme Brahm (who is

the supreme ‘Self’ and cosmic transcendental Consciousness) known as Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation.

The very fact that one sees two entities in what is essentially non-dual and immutable itself shows the low level of intellectual development and the deluded mind of the creature that sees this difference. [It is like the case of hallucination when one sees two images of the same object with two eyes whereas the two eyes ought to be seeing a combined three-dimensional single image of that object. It’s like seeing many images of the sun or the moon in many pans full of water and thinking that there are as many suns or moons in the sky as the number of images seen. Refer Amrit Naad Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12 which precisely describes this phenomenon.] (45).

“verse nos. 46-47 = The uniformity and oneness of the consciousness can be arrived at by intelligent application of the mind so that it can sift through and analyse available evidence and make intelligent deductions from it by applying wisdom, logic and the elimination process.

Once this uniformity and non-dual nature of the consciousness is established (i.e. once the wise man knows that the only thing of worth in whatever that exists in this world has the same basic nature and essence known as ‘consciousness’, that there is no duality and dichotomy in the world in the real sense because its basic worth lies not in its gross form but in the consciousness present in it, and that whatever duality that apparently exists is due to total stupidity and ignorance of the truth) the wise and enlightened man becomes free from all sorts of mental confusions and emotional agitations. He no longer remains tied to the shackles of delusions and ignorance¹.

He finds access to the eternal fount of extreme beatitude and felicity that comes with obtaining the essence of or knowing the truth of ‘Shiva’ which is non-dual and only one of its kind² (46-47).

{¹The intrinsic value of a golden ornament lies in the quantity and purity of its gold content rather than its external form. Would anyone pay the same amount of money for a decorative piece of jewelry if he knows that it is not gold, but brass? Both gold and well-polished brass look almost alike to a naïve person; even the quality and purity of gold is not possible to be judged easily by a lay person. But all his confusions and doubts about the true value of the ornament are removed when its value is judged by an expert gold-smith. Likewise, ‘Gyan’ (truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition, information and enlightenment) tells a man what the real value and worth of the world is, what the ‘reality and truth’ of this world of uncountable sense objects and astounding charms is, what spiritual value does it have? It is then the man becomes ‘enlightened’ and sees the reality behind the fascinating external façade of pompous artificiality and illusive charms. He realises that everything is perishable and transient, and therefore of no actual and eternal value. He discovers that the only thing of any spiritual worth in this world is the ‘consciousness’ much like the gold in the ornament cited above. It is the true secret of life and existence; it is eternal and imperishable. When this happens, the darkness of delusions and ignorance are dispelled, and instead light of enlightenment shines through to illuminate the entire existence for the spiritual aspirant.

²The word Shiva refers to the eclectic divine virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, beauty, piety, holiness, renunciation, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, purity and truth. When a person becomes wise enough to rise above the mundane and lowly existence of remaining engrossed in worldly affairs of the sense objects and self-gratification, a selfish life which lacks broadness of vision and long-term welfare of the soul, when he gets to see the ‘truth’ in the light of wisdom and enlightenment, it is only then that he begins to see things from a higher pedestal, with a broader perspective of existence and the truthful nature of the soul and its future, and thereby develop a panoramic view of existence. It is like seeing earth from space when all the warts on the earth’s surface—the mighty mountains and the meandering rivers, the green fields and the dry

deserts, the artificial boundaries that separate nations and states—vanish. What is seen is a beautiful blue ball hanging from nowhere in the vast dark void of space. One then begins to wander why men fight each other for a yard of land and cut each others throat for a gram of gold!

Thus, a wise man begins the search for the ‘truth and reality’ by studying the scriptures and consulting wise men. He trains his mind to gather all information and then analyse it to intelligently arrive at conclusions that are not based on hearsay, whims and misconceptions but on sound ground and reasoning. He understands the essence of the fundamental tenets of the scriptures and sees the eclectic, quintessential and undeniable spiritual ‘truths’ encoded in them. He applies this learning in practice and realises their true worth along with discovering who he himself actually is. He then becomes ‘Shiva’ personified; he has discovered the ‘Shiva’ principle, or the grand irrefutable Truth of creation. He has accessed the magnificently grand virtues that are the hallmarks of divinity and holiness which are collectively called ‘Shiva’.”}

The Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77 affirms that there is basically no difference between a Jiva (the living being) and the Ishwar (the Supreme Being). To quote—“The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghatakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghatakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

{The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. This fact is elucidated in a number of Upanishads¹. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.}

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva, the living being or the creature, and the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived². This distinction or separation comes because one is not aware of the ‘truth and reality’, and is deluded to believe in the concept of duality or Dwaitya.

{Suppose we have different types of ornaments made of ‘gold’. A wise person is one who recognizes them all as ‘golden ornaments’, and not by their individual names, shapes or sizes, or even their usage. It is raw gold that has been crafted by the goldsmith into so many shapes and sizes, giving the same element known as ‘gold’ its myriad names and different market values. If ‘gold’ is removed from these ornaments, all of them lose their intrinsic value and inherent importance.

Similarly, everything in this creation—and that includes the Jiva—is a manifestation of Brahm. Since the Jiva is a living conscious entity that harbours the Atma, the pure consciousness, in its body, it has a special relationship with Brahm as the latter is the universal cosmic Consciousness that resides in each unit of creation. In other words, it is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has transformed itself into the living being known as the Jiva. It is just like ‘gold’ being transformed into an ornament having a name other than ‘gold’.} (77).”

²The supreme Authority that determines the fate of the living being is known as Ishwar or the Lord God, the Parmatma. Like an emperor who decides the fate of his subjects, the Ishwar decides how the creature should be rewarded or punished for his deeds and actions. The Ishwar is a neutral judge for all the living beings. As has been discussed earlier, the Maya is under the control of Ishwar which the Upanishads prefer to call ‘Brahm’. Brahm not only creates Maya but has full control over it. The Jiva on the other hand neither creates the Maya nor has any control over it. That is why Maya can delude the Jiva but not influence Brahm. If the Jiva wishes to get rid of the problems created by Maya then he has to request the Lord of Maya, i.e. Brahm or Ishwar, to help him out. The Lord is extremely merciful; if the Jiva prays to the Lord then the Lord removes the veil of Maya cast upon him and the Jiva is able to see the real thing in the light of Gyan that makes him realised, enlightened and wise.

An important observation can be made here. Lord Ram has told Laxman in this Doha no. 15 that there indeed exists a difference between a Jiva and Ishwar. This is to answer Laxman’s question asked in Doha no. 14. The Lord had also told Laxman that he will give brief answers—refer Chaupai line no. 1 that immediately follows Doha no. 14.

Upon careful analysis we deduce that though brief and to the point, all the answers that Lord Ram gave Laxman incorporate the essential teachings and doctrines of the Upanishads.]

चौ०. धर्म तें बिरति जोग तें ग्याना । ग्यान मोच्छप्रद बेद बखाना ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

dharma tēm birati jōga tēm gyānā. gyāna mōcchaprada bēda bakhānā. 1.

With ‘Dharma’ comes ‘Vairagya’, and with ‘Yoga’ comes ‘Gyan’. Gyan paves the way for ‘Moksha’. [That is, all these must act in coordination for the spiritual well-being of the Jiva.] (1)

[Note—There is a very interesting deduction that we can arrive at by a close study of this Chaupai. As we have read above, the word ‘Yoga’ means to establish a union between two entities. The two pair of entities here are ‘Dharma’ and ‘Vairagya’ on the one hand, and ‘Gyan’ and ‘Moksha’ on the other hand. Yoga therefore helps the Jiva to establish coordination between all of them. That is, a practitioner of Yoga is able to reap the combined benefits of Dharma, Vairagya, Gyan and Moksha simultaneously. He gets acclaim and honour for his righteous deeds and noble thoughts, he enjoys the world without getting obsessed with it and affected by its countless miseries and horrors, he is regarded as a wise and enlightened person whose advice is

sought by others, no amount of delusions and darkness of ignorance would now be able to put out the light of knowledge that has begun to shine from deep inside his inner-self, and no fetter will be strong enough to shackle him (i.e. his Atma) any longer.

Following the path of Dharma and Vairagya cleanses inner-self and scrubs off all the taints, impurities and blemishes that have formed a thick crust of negativity around his Atma, the true self of the Jiva. His path towards Moksha is lighted by Gyan, and this light shows the Jiva all the spiritual pitfalls in which he might have fallen had he walked on the same path leading to Moksha in the darkness of ignorance (called A-gyan). Even as success in any endeavour is dependent upon a coordination of many favourable factors playing in harmony with each other, success in this spiritual endeavour is aided and spurred on by Yoga. This indeed is the real and practical benefit of 'Yoga'.]

The word *Dharma* literally means obeying the general rules of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, morality and ethics. Any action or deed that is done or undertaken with these eclectic virtues in mind would come under the overall definition of Dharma. The term 'Vairagya' means renunciation, dispassion, detachment and non-involvement with the material world and its deluding charms.

A Jiva (the living being) has been indulgent, involved and associated with the world and its material sense objects from time immemorial. The world and its material things are gross by their inherent nature and dominated by the Tama Guna. Constant association with them leaves an imprint on the Atma or the pure self of the Jiva, and the latter is encrusted in a thick layer of delusions, negativity, faults, shortcomings etc. leading to countless sorrows, pain, miseries and torments. The Jiva gets sucked in the vortex represented by worldly fetters that keep him shackled for eternity. He continues to remain engrossed in the world and its material things in the false hope or expectation that they will give him peace, happiness and joy. On the contrary, they heap him with miseries and torments, pulling him down into a dark well from which the Jiva finds difficult to extricate himself as referred to in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 15. This has been explained earlier.

The Jiva had been perpetrating all sorts of mischief and nuisance, indulging in falsehood, deceit, conceit, pretensions and tricks in order to satisfy his natural urges for gratifying his 'lower self', i.e. his body and its organs, not paying heed to the requirements of his 'higher self', i.e. the needs of his Atma. All such activities of the Jiva come under the over all classification of things that are 'A-Dharma' or the opposite of what consists of Dharma. But ironically he discovers that all his efforts to find peace and happiness by following the easier path of 'A-Dharma' have failed to yield the desired result. Then if he is wise and intelligent, he will sincerely look around to find how his real objective can be achieved.

It is upon diligent enquiry that he discovers the concept of 'Dharma' by the study of the scriptures and company of wise and saintly people. The Jiva then takes a resolve to follow the principles of Dharma if they give him eternal bliss and happiness, and help him to break free from the endless cycle of miseries and torments associated with birth and death.

The path of Dharma initially appears to be difficult for him because he has to exercise exemplary self-restraint and make great efforts to rein-in his spoilt habits. But gradually he finds that each act of Dharma gives him internal peace that is more profound and deep than the artificial peace got by worldly success in obtaining the desired things or attaining transient and impermanent successes in the temporal world that itself is inconsistent. The profound internal satisfaction, gratitude, peace and happiness that one experiences by following the path of Dharma vis-à-vis the path of A-Dharma inspires and motivates the Jiva to devote full time to the former path.

Dharma has a sublime dimension to all its activities; it is marked by dominance of Sata Guna, and even the Raja Guna that is present is of a higher category. The Jiva realises that the world is selfish and it can never give him his freedom because the world needs a 'slave free of

charge to satisfy its needs'. The world keeps him shackled by throwing some bits and pieces of tempting things to keep him engaged, extracting the most out of him, and then chucking him off like deadwood. The Jiva discovers that the world and its material things will never give him happiness, peace and bliss that he had set out to find by allowing himself to remain engrossed in it.

Hence, by experience he becomes disenchanted with the deluding world and its material charms that are as illusive as the mirage in a hot desert. So a wizened, self-realised and enlightened Jiva develops a gradual sense of disillusionment with the gross world and its equally gross sense objects. That is, he develops *Vairagya* from this world. And the cause of this *Vairagya* is Dharma—because the latter has enlightened the Jiva where true peace and happiness lies. The wise, self-realised and enlightened spiritual aspirant understands that pursuit of this world can never give him true peace, happiness, comfort, joy and bliss which are the main purpose for which he had followed the temptations of the world and its material sense objects. He also realises that the latter entities are the cause of all his grief, miseries and torments. So he develops a deep sense of detachment from the world and its material sense objects because they do not serve his interest, they do not fulfill his spiritual objective of finding eternal peace and bliss as well as freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Since this sort of renunciation and detachment comes from within, it is firm and steady as opposed to the condition when a person is forced to follow the path of renunciation, called *Sanyas*, simply because it is a tradition and therefore must be obeyed by him if he wishes to avoid scorn by the society. Such a person is worse than a person who has not taken to *Sanyas* at all because on the one hand he subjects his body to the severity of life as a *Sanyasi* for which he is not prepared mentally, robbing him of the basic comforts of life to which he was accustomed as a householder, and on the other hand he gets none of the spiritual benefits that come with accepting the life of *Sanyas* whole-heartedly and voluntarily. Forced renunciation is no renunciation.

If the *Vairagya* is true and internal then no amount of worldly temptations or allurements would be able to lure the spiritual aspirant away from his chosen path; they would not be able to trap him in their tentacles. It is only a person who pretends to have adopted *Vairagya* without actually having done so is the one who falls and gets entangled in the web of miseries and grief associated with falsehood and deceit.

Now let us come to the next term *Yoga* and examine how it helps the Jiva.

The word 'Yoga' is derived from two verbal roots—viz. 'Yuj' = Yu + Ja, meaning to yoke, or to concentrate. The dictionary meaning of the word is 'to join, a junction point, to attach, harness, to team with, to put together, to fix any union, to foster, to connect, suitability or compatibility of two or more things'. It also means 'to strive, endeavour, due diligence and industry; to concentrate, meditate, contemplate and focus the mind and thought on some abstraction; self restraint and channelising one's vital strength and energy in a particular direction'. The process of concentration, contemplation and meditation as envisioned by the Upanishads needed a well-disciplined mind and body. For this to happen, a set of exercises were devised—called the various 'Aasans and Bandhas' (sitting postures and controlling of the vital functions of the body). So, taken purely in its modern concept, it refers to the regime of different exercises, but on a broader plane its main objectives is to enable the aspirant to meditate and focus his energy on self purification, self elevation and self realisation. The fact that these exercises help eliminate—or at least alleviate—so many ailments that afflicts a body in today's stressful life is an additional bonus, but not the aim of *Yoga*, though of course a healthy body is definitely conducive in spiritual practice.

Therefore it is that school of philosophy that helps a Jiva, the living being or the individual soul, to attain concentration on the Supreme Being or the cosmic Soul known as Ishwara. As the denser or more concentrated matter has a greater gravitational pull compared to the lighter and lesser denser one, the concentration results in the supreme Soul pulling the

individual soul by the mere force of its attractive force so as to bring about the former plunging headlong into the latter to become one with it. This phenomenon is likened to the individual obtaining the state of Kaivalya or oneness with the Supreme Being so that only the latter is left behind and the former vanishes from existence for all practical purposes.

In practice, 'Yoga' usually means doing meditation and contemplation that enables the man to focus his attention on important issues so that he can coordinate all his faculties and efforts in his search for the truth and reality of anything. In the spiritual field, this is to find the truth about one's own self, about the world around, about how to free one's self from the fetters of ignorance, and about how to bring about a union between the different aspects of the universal Truth that appears to be scattered around due to the compound effects of generations of ignorance about the reality. It involves establishing a unity between the individual Atma, the 'self' of the person, and the cosmic Atma known as the Supreme Self by various well established processes that are documented in the scriptures. This effort makes a practitioner of Yoga enlightened about the truth of the pure consciousness residing in his bosom as the Atma, and this realisation, known as 'self-realisation', leads to attainment of eternal and profound internal ecstasy, bliss, felicity and beatitude. When this is achieved, the practitioner of Yoga is said to have found freedom from all delusions arising out of ignorance centered around the body and the world of material sense organs. The objective or aim of Yoga has been described in Yog Kundali Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 74, Canto 3, verse nos. 13-17. The culmination of Yoga is to help one realise one's true divine form and find rest in the spiritual glory of self-realisation, the discovery of the ultimate fount of bliss and joy residing in one's own bosom as the 'consciousness' known as the Atma.

Yoga practices involve some steps known as the limbs or aspects of Yoga. Usually there are said to be eight such steps. These are called 'Astaanga Yoga'.

These eight fold path of Yoga have been listed in *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 11—11 ½ and *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 24-25 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, as well as in *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 28-34, and *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 3-10 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

The first five steps of Yoga, i.e. Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranayam and Pratyahara are considered external processes or 'Bahiranga Yoga' (i.e. Yoga practices that involve the external gross aspect of the body such as its various organs of perception and action), while the last three, i.e. Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi are called the internal processes or 'Antarang Yoga' (i.e. Yoga that involves the subtle components of the body such as the mind and intellect). Patanjali says in his 12th maxim of the first chapter of Yog Sutra that success in Yoga can be achieved by a coordination of practice and detachment. While 'practice' obviously implies the observation of rules and steps of Yoga as defined in Yoga treatises, 'detachment' means the consciousness that has given up desires for objects either seen or heard of. This detachment should be comprehensive in the sense that the practitioner of Yoga should also be indifferent towards the three Gunas or qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama that dominate all behavioral patterns in this world.

These eight steps of Yoga designed by Patanjali are meant to guide the spiritual aspirant gradually and in a systematic manner to progress higher in his spiritual endeavours and ultimately achieve the supreme state of eternal blissfulness that comes with inner awakening and experiencing the divine source of light and enlightenment that resides in one's own bosom.

Their aim is to establish a union between the various aspects of the universal Truth that have revealed itself in a variety of ways in this world into one single entity of the Absolute Truth. If a Jiva practices Yoga and achieves this aim, i.e. if he becomes enlightened about the Absolute Truth then obviously he will have obtained 'Gyan' or truthful knowledge.

What then is this Absolute Truth? It is the realisation that the same cosmic super Consciousness has revealed itself in myriad of ways in this world, that it is the only entity that is real and truthful, that the true nature of the Jiva is this Consciousness known as the Atma residing

in a subtle form inside the gross body, in its inner-self as its inner-being and the ‘true self’ of the Jiva, that this Atma is the same as the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma, that the gross world seen all around is an imagination of the mind of the Jiva and has no reality in it, that the Atma is eternal and imperishable whereas the world and the body are mortal and perishable, that true freedom from miseries and grief is to realise that such feelings are limited to the gross body and its sense organs of perception and action that relate to the Jiva’s interaction with the gross world, and they have no bearing upon the Atma which is a sublime and divine entity that is eternally blissful and full of beatitude, that true liberation and deliverance (called Mukti) as well as emancipation and salvation (called Moksha) means freedom from ignorance and delusions that comes with the understanding of what constitutes the Atma, the Parmatma, and the world.

Obviously, when the Jiva becomes thus enlightened, he is said to have acquired *Gyan* or truthful form of spiritual knowledge; the Jiva becomes self-realised and enlightened. He becomes a *Gyani*—one who has *Gyan*.

When one has acquired true knowledge, he is deemed to have attained *Moksha* or emancipation and salvation. This means that the Jiva realises the true nature of his ‘self’ and discards the fetter of the body and the world to merge his Atma with the cosmic Atma known as Brahman so much so that he is eternally liberated from the cycle of birth and death and their attending sorrows and problems. He is delivered from this entangling world and its web of miseries and delusions.

In the next line, Lord Ram tells Laxman that in spite of the powerful abilities of *Gyan* and *Yoga* in aiding the spiritual aspirant to attain his objectives of liberation and deliverance, the Lord is best endeared by following the path of *Bhakti*, i.e. the path of complete and sincere devotion, love and submission to the Lord.

In this context therefore we must have a look at *Yoga* from a different angle, a view which incorporates *Bhakti* and *Gyan* as one of its various limbs or branches. Now, let us have a quick glimpse at these aspects of *Yoga*.

Gyan Yoga—*Gyan Yoga* involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be ‘real’ but is actually like a ‘shadow of the truth’. This *Gyan Yoga* helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following *Gyan Yoga* are called ‘seers’ because they can ‘see’ beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. *Gyan Yoga* is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

Gyan Yoga cannot be separated from the concept of *Gyan Shakti* is related to the stupendous powers and authority possessed by ‘knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment’, and the instrument that implements this authority and power is the intellect. *Gyan* is empowerment, because without knowledge the mind and body would work like those of animals. Therefore, *Gyan Shakti* is the powers, potentials, authority, strength, respect and empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise in any subject. This *Shakti* represents the dynamic powers and potentials that are a natural accompaniment of these grand qualities. This is called *Gyan Shakti* simply because merely wish and determination wouldn’t suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the necessary expertise and level of wisdom required to accomplish his objectives successfully. In this context, *Gyan Yoga* would be to divert the diligence with which a man applies this knowledge, wisdom, erudition and skills to acquire the objects of this material world and get acclaim and applause for his expertise, knowledge and wisdom to achieving success in uplifting himself and realising the ultimate goal and truth of this life and existence, and freeing himself from the clutches of delusions which have tied him down through numerous lives to find final liberation and deliverance for his soul. *Gyan Yoga* endeavours to channelise one’s knowledge into auspicious avenues and inspire the creature to make efforts relying upon the knowledge and wisdom he possesses to bring about a union

between the individual creature's soul and the cosmic Soul and Consciousness known as Brahm so that ultimate emancipation and salvation is obtained and the cycle of delusions, birth and death and their endless horrors are got rid of. Therefore, Gyan Yoga entails diligent study and pursuance of the Truth, turning inwards and upwards instead of outwards and downwards, to separate the non-truth from the truth like separating the grain from the chaff, and finally coming to grasp with the eclectic concept of 'truth and absolute reality' of the 'self and the Atma', of 'Brahm and Moksha (final and ultimate liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation)'.

The relationship between Yoga and Gyan—This has been described in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12-26, and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-15.

Bhakti Yoga— Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

The concept of Bhakti Yoga is similarly integral to the concept of *Ichhaa Shakti* relates to the power of the mind to have or make wishes, desires, aspirations and the determination to fulfill them. It is longing for anything, wanting to possess it any cost, and then endeavouring to acquire it. It is a precursor to Karma Shakti. It is only when one wishes to do anything and has the determination to do it that he actually goes about doing anything at all, strives hard to get success in it, and then would like to enjoy the fruits of his labour. It is closely related to Bhakti Yoga inasmuch as when the Ichhaa (desires) are turned away from the world and hooked onto the search for the Truth and Reality with devotion and sincerity of purpose, it helps the man to turn away from the entrapping world of delusions and artificial comforts towards the world of truth and reality, i.e. towards his true 'self', the pure consciousness. The word 'Bhakti' means to be sincerely committed and devoted to anything, any cause, any principle, any doctrine or any entity. In this case, the devotion is towards the supreme transcendental Truth and the absolute Reality, whether known as Brahm or as the Atma. Bhakti Yoga therefore means a devoted and committed approach that coordinates the desires and actions in such a way that they are diverted to realisation of the supreme Truth known as Brahm instead of the mortal and perishable world of delusions and entrapments.

The importance of Bhakti has been elaborately described in the Tripadvibhūt Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 9-12.]

जातेँ बेगि द्रवउँ मैं भाई । सो मम भगति भगत सुखदाई ॥ २ ॥

jātēṁ bēgi drava'um' mair̥ bhā'ī. sō mama bhagati bhagata sukhadā'ī. 2.

Oh brother (Laxman)! It is Bhakti (devotion, love and submission for the Lord) which makes me feel happy and pleased very easily. It is this eclectic virtue of having Bhakti for me that bestows comfort, happiness, joy, peace, fulfillment and bliss to my devotees.

[In other words, I, the Supreme Lord, is very easily and conveniently pleased if the spiritual aspirant develops Bhakti for the Lord as compared to seeking the same Lord by the following other paths, such as the arduous path of Gyan and Yoga. Since the path of Bhakti is the easiest path leading to the Supreme Being, it is most comfortable for the seeker, and its rewards are more profound because it is liked the Lord himself.

Bhakti pleases the Lord most and very easily. Besides this benefit, it gives the practitioner of Bhakti immense happiness, peace, contentedness and bliss.] (2)

[Note—Let us learn more about this eclectic concept of *Bhakti* that is so much lauded by Lord Ram himself.

Bhakti—(noun; feminine gender) The concept of *Bhakti* has a very broad sweep, and it incorporates such glorious virtues as having, inter alia, sincere devotion, dedication and firm faith in the Lord God, total submission and surrender before the Lord God, having unwavering love, conviction and belief in the Lord God, to be completely dedicated to the Lord and surrender oneself to him, having reverence and veneration for the Lord God, having no other solace, succour, hope and respite except the Lord, treating oneself as a humble servant of the Lord God and feeling fortunate at being able to serve the Lord God, remembering the Lord God at all times and offering each and every deed done and action taken to the Lord without expecting anything in return, remaining unruffled and calm under all circumstances with the view that these are the wishes of the Lord God and one has no right to get overly excited over them. In brief, *Bhakti* entails honouring the divine forces of creation in the form of some chosen deity who personifies the grandest virtues in creation.

The *Holy Bible* also asserts the importance of ‘*Bhakti*’ as follows— ‘In him we live and move, and have our being’ (Acts, 17/28), ‘Trust in him at all times, you people, pour out your heart before him; for God is a refuge for us’ (Psalms, 62/8).

Narad Bhakti Sutra, literally meaning the fundamental formula that defines what comprises devotion for Lord God as enunciated by sage Narad who was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, is a treatise on *Bhakti* that is succinct and is universally respected as being one of the best in its genre. It has only 84 Sanskrit verses.

It says that the easiest (verse no. 58) and the best instrument for God-realisation (verse no. 80, 81) is ‘*Bhakti*’ because it gives the spiritual fruit or reward for which a person does any auspicious effort in the first place (verse no. 26, 30). It is superior to Gyan (knowledge), to Yoga (meditation), to Karma (rituals and religious observances), and other spiritual traditions (verse no. 25). *Bhakti* is a complete and wholesome way to attain self and god realisation; it needs no other support or help (verse no. 59).

Bhakti gives eternal peace and bliss of the highest order (verse no. 60).

Bhakti is divided into two aspects—(i) *Paraa Bhakti*, and (ii) *A-paraa Bhakti*. The *A-paraa Bhakti* is divided further into (a) *Gauna Bhakti*, and (b) *Mukhya Bhakti*. The *Paraa Bhakti* is the aim of spiritual practice, while the *A-paraa Bhakti* is a means to achieve success in it.

Paraa Bhakti is attainment of extreme and eternal bliss obtained upon God-realisation which is equivalent to self-realisation because the *Paramatma*, the Supreme Soul and the cosmic Spirit, is the same as the individual’s *Atma* or his own soul. It is like nectar, and gives immortality and supreme form of bliss (verse nos. 2 and 3); it helps eliminate worldly desires and temptations (verse no. 7).

The *A-paraa Bhakti* involves some methods to make this possible—such as having interest in worshipping the Lord (verse no. 16), having desire and interest in listening to the stories associated with the Lord (verse no. 17), to be engrossed in the thoughts of the ‘self’ or the *Atma* (verse no. 18), surrendering all deeds to the Lord and always remembering him (verse no. 19).

But it must be noted that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality is also conducive to attaining nearness or oneness with God (verse no. 28). In other words, Gyan and *Bhakti* go hand in hand; they aid each other instead of counteracting one another (verse no. 29). *Bhakti* is the only way that leads to *Mukti*—liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration leading to permanent rest for the soul (verse no. 33). *Bhakti* helps one to break free from the shackling effects of this deluding and entrapping world (verse no. 33).

The methods by which *Bhakti* can be established and made to bloom in one’s heart are narrated in verse nos. 34-42 as follows—to abandon attachments to material sense objects and sensual pleasures of this world, to desist from self gratification of the sense organs (verse no. 35), to do *Bhajan*—or the constant remembrance of the Lord, his divine name and divine deeds (verse

nos. 36, 79), to hear and sing the divine stories, the virtues and the holy name of the Lord along with others in the community (verse no. 37), to have contact and communion with holy men such as great saints (verse no. 38-39, 42) which is obtained when the Lord is kind (verse no. 40), to treat true devotees of the Lord as being equivalent to the Lord himself (verse no. 41), to offer all the deeds and their fruits or rewards to the Lord (verse no. 61) along with any trace of negativity such as desires, anger, pride etc. that may still linger on (verse no. 65), and in general doing everything that is auspicious and holy which makes it possible for him to enhance his level of Bhakti (verse no. 76).

Other aids to Bhakti are the following—Abandonment of the feeling of worldly happiness and joy on the one hand, and of sorrow, misery and grief on the other hand, eliminating any sort of desires and passions such as for gain or profit of any kind, and to be careful not to waste a single moment and be prepared for death that may come any time (verse no. 77). Practicing the virtues of ‘Ahinsaa’ (non-violence), ‘Satya’ (truthfulness), ‘Shaucha’ (cleanliness and purity), ‘Dayaa’ (mercy and compassion), and ‘Aastikta’ (belief in God and the Holy Spirit as well as the teaching of the scriptures) etc. (verse no. 78).

The main obstacle in Bhakti is bad company (verse no. 43), as well as Kaam (wordly desires and passions), Krodh (anger) and Moha (infatuations, attachments, delusions, entanglements) that lead to Smriti-bhransa (failure to remember the horrible consequences of committing sins and getting entangled in the world), Buddhi-naash (destruction of intelligent thinking and wisdom), and Sarwa-naash (complete ruin) (verse no. 44).

Maya (the web of delusions so characteristic of this world) is a great obstacle and it is overcome only by detachment from all things (verse no. 46). Other methods of overcoming Maya are to live a serene life away from the world (verse no. 67), to break all worldly fetters and bondages, to become neutral by rising above the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama, and to discard attempts to acquire and then worry about the protection of worldly possessions (verse no. 47), to not bother about the fruits of one’s deeds and labour but do one’s duty as ordained by destiny, peacefully and stoically (verse no. 48), and to abandon even the Vedas (excessive study of the scriptures once the basic knowledge and guidance has been obtained) and become free from all doubts, confusions, perplexities and consternations (verse no. 49).

One must avoid the following also—talking about or remembering anything pertaining to women, material wealth, hearsay and talks that create doubts in the mind about the truth of the Holy Spirit, talks about one’s enemies or those who are unfavourable—because all these things unnecessarily create vexation for the spirit (verse no. 63); negative characters such as Abhmaan and Dambha (pride and arrogance accompanied by deceit, conceit and pretensions) etc. (verse no. 64); getting involved in worthless debates and arguments (verse no. 74).

The ‘Gauna’ Bhakti is like a dumb man attempting to describe some delicious food (verse no. 52)—i.e. it is a silent form of devotion for the Lord which has no external signs. Here, the devotee sips the nectar of spiritual bliss that comes with self and god realisation without showing any signs of his spiritual enlightenment. It can be experienced and never be described; nothing more remains to be attained or desired for after that (verse no. 54).

The ‘Gauna Bhakti’ is of three types (verse no. 56)—(i) Saatvika, (ii) Raajsik, and (iii) Taamsik. These are also called ‘Aarta-bhakti’, ‘Artharth-bhakti’, and ‘Jigyasu-bhakti’. Gauna Bhakti is easy because it does not require any effort as it is done directly by having natural love for the God that arises in one’s heart. It leads to internal peace and bliss (verse nos. 58-60).

A true and sincere devotee of the Lord acquires a holy aura around him which makes him effuse divinity and holiness similar to the Lord, thereby making their presence beneficial for the whole world around them (verse no. 68-71). Like the universality and oneness of the Supreme Being, Supreme Spirit, the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Reality, such realised devotees of the Lord have no distinction as to their caste, religion, knowledge, physical form, birth, level of worldly prosperity or poverty, or the type of deeds done by them—because they have risen above such mundane considerations (verse no. 72-73).

The 11 types of devotees of the Lord—Narad Bhakti Sutra, verse no. 82 outlines the eleven forms of Bhakti, which are actually variations of the same Gauna Bhakti because their main objective is the same—to develop devotion and love for the Lord which lead to spiritual bliss, to liberation of the soul from worldly delusions as well as miseries, and to attain oneness of the individual's soul with the Supreme Soul of creation so that the cycle of birth and death is terminated for good. They are as follows:—(i) Guna and Mahatamya of the Lord—this involves narrating, singing and generally propagating the glories of the Lord and his divine virtues; (ii) Rupa—this involves remembering the divine form of the Lord and worshipping this form; (iii) Pooja—this involves offering of formal forms of worship to the Lord; (iv) Smaran—constantly and always remembering the Lord; (v) Daasya—to become a humble servant of the Lord; to serve the Lord with great simplicity and humility, not expecting anything in return; to be ever eager to do anything which would please the Lord; (vi) Sakhya—to treat the Lord as one's close friend and companion; (vii) Kanta—to honour the divine radiance of the Lord, and visualize that the Lord's radiance shining on one's self as the light of the sun; (viii) Vaatsalya—to love the Lord dearly as one loves one's children; (ix) Atma-nivedan—to submit one's self to the Lord; to pray to the Lord internally; to treat one's Atma as a fraction of the Supreme Atma represented by the Lord God; (x) Tanmayataa—to remain perpetually engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord and to remain lost in the bliss derived from it; and (xi) Param-viraha—to suffer gravely due to separation from the Lord just like a lover remains submerged in grief if his loved one is separated from him.

Finally, Narad Bhakti Sutra lists some of the great devotees of the Lord as follows—Sanat-kumars, Veda-vyas, Shukdeo, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Shesh, Uddhav, Aaruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishan, etc. (verse no. 83).

The 9 types or paths of Bhakti, called the 'Navadhaa Bhakti', according to *Ram Charit Manas* (Ramayana) of Goswami Tulsidas—Basically, there are nine types of Bhaktis or the 9-fold path of devotion. In short, there are the following:- (1) hearing about the Lord's virtues, glories, deeds, fames, holy name etc.; (2) talking and discussing about the Lord; (3) remembering him; (4) serving his holy feet; (5) adoring and worshipping him; (6) honouring and revering him; (7) submission and humility before him, treating him as a friend and companion; (8) concentrating on one's pure-self or Atma; (9) and treating the Atma (soul) as being the manifestation of the Lord.

The great epic Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas is a wonderful and matchless treatise on the eclectic concept of Bhakti which permeates throughout the Holy Book as one of its major characteristic themes. The following list gives an overall idea where this book incorporates Bhakti in its narration:--

(i) Ayodhya Kand—Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93; Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137; Doha no. 204; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 291; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301.

(ii) Aranya Kand—Chaupai line nos. 2-9 that precede Doha no. 16; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

(iii) Kishkindha Kand—Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12; Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15.

(iv) Sundar Kand—Doha no. 46, and Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 6 that precede Doha no. 47; Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 1-7.

(v) Uttar Kand—Chanda line no. 5-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; from Chaupai line no. 1, 7-10 that precedes Doha no. 86, to Doha no. 87 Ka; Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120; Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; Doha no. 122 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 15-19.

Now let us sample a few verses briefly to see the importance and benefits of Bhakti. Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93 emphasises that the best thing to do for one's spiritual welfare is to have unwavering and the purest form of devotion

and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram—i.e. to serve the Lord and have full faith in him. All the faculties of a man, such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds and actions), and his Bachan (words) should be directed towards this end. [सखा परम परमारथु एहू । मन क्रम बचन राम पद नेहू ॥ ६ ॥]

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137 says “Lord Ram is concerned with the level of affection that one has for the Lord, and other things are immaterial as far as the Lord is concerned; let this be known to all.”

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116 briefly say as follows—“Lord Ram loves Bhakti (devotion) while Maya (delusions) is merely like an obedient dancer who does the bidding of her Lord to please him. [The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would synchronise all her dance moves in accordance with the music being played and song being sung.] Since Lord Ram favours Bhakti, Maya is scared of it. Bhakti is free from any taint or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness. Maya is afraid of anyone in whose heart Bhakti resides with full authority—because Maya is simply a maid when it is compared to Bhakti. So Maya cannot play its tricks upon a devotee of the Lord in whose heart Bhakti lives as the reigning mistress.”

Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15 says “Kaam, or worldly desires and lust, do not sprout in the mind and heart of followers and devotees of Lord Hari just like it is impossible for grass to grow in a patch of infertile (desert or rocky and barren) land even if it rains there.”

Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120 say—“Saints are the wise ones, and their wisdom is like the spade or the shovel which helps them dig out the truth from the surface of untruth and delusions. Gyan (truthful spiritual knowledge) and Vairagya (renunciation; detachment from delusions and abandonment of ignorance) are like their two eyes. When one sincerely searches for the truth, he finds that Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) is like a gem that is like a treasure house of all happiness and well-beings.”

Vairagya is the precondition to developing Gyan—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 of Sortha (a sort of Doha) no. 89 Ka. It says—“Can Gyan (true knowledge) be acquired without the help of a wise Guru (teacher); can Gyan (true spiritual knowledge leading to enlightenment) be acquired without Vairagya (renunciation, dispassion and detachment from delusory world ridden by ignorance); and can true happiness and bliss ever be obtained with having Bhakti (devotion and love) for Hari (Lord God). This is the declaration of the Vedas and the Purans (hence it is unquestionably correct because it is ancient and time-tested wisdom).”

“Anyone who has the priceless gem in the form of Bhakti (unflinching devotion and purest form of love) for Lord Ram in his heart can never have any sorrow or grief even in his dreams; he is free from them”—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 120.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 86, the Lord himself declares to sage Kaagbhusund—“I repeatedly tell you, truthfully, that there is nothing or no one in this world as dear to me as the person who serves me with devotion, faith and sincerity. Even Brahma, the creator, is like other ordinary beings for me if he lacks devotion and faith in me. On the contrary, if a creature has devotion and faith in me then I love like my life even though he may be most lowly and downtrodden.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87 and line no. 2 of Doha 87 Ka, Lord Ram says—“amongst all the creatures, they who have devotion, love, affection, belief and faith in me after having abandoned all sorts of negativity such as deceit, pretensions and delusions, verily I say that they are very dear to me no matter who they are, even if they are impotent men or women, or even if they are humble creatures of whatever denomination.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 204 which says—“I am not interested in Artha (material wealth and prosperity), Dharma (following the scriptural sanctioned path of righteousness and probity), Kaam (fulfillment of worldly desires) or Nirvana (Moksha—emancipation and salvation of the soul). The only boon and reward I want is that I may have unwavering, undiluted and un-stunted love and devotion for holy feet of Lord Ram for all generations to come, for all times to come, and for all my future births.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 119, the crow saint Kaagbhusund tells Garud (the legendary eagle and the mount of lord Vishnu who had come to the former to hear the divine story of Lord Ram and be enlightened on spiritual matters)—“Moksha (spiritual liberation and deliverance) is not possible without having strong Bhakti (devotion and love) for Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being). Hence, those who are wise and enlightened prefer to have Bhakti, they give precedence to Bhakti, over all other means of obtaining Moksha. Moksha cannot be sustained without Bhakti even as liquid water needs a solid ground or surface to act as its base for its physical existence in this world.”

Why should one have total devotion for Lord Ram and love the Lord more than anyone else in this world have been outlined by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Uma in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma—“Listen Uma! In this self-centered and selfish world, there is no one more dear and well-wisher than Lord Ram. No, it is not the Guru (moral preceptor or teacher), father, mother, friend or any master or lord. It is the natural habit of all (except Lord Sri Ram), be it the god, a human being, a sage or anybody else, that they love someone only as long as their self interests are served.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 291, sage Vashistha tells Lord Ram “let all Sukha (happiness and comfort), Karma and Dharma (deeds and laws of conduct) burn down where there is no love for the holy feet of Lord Ram. All righteous efforts become unrighteous, all good fortunes and luck turn to be misfortunes and ill-luck, and all types of knowledge and wisdom become as worthless as false and misleading knowledge—when there is no love for Lord Ram, or where love and devotion for the Lord does not dominate such efforts, such knowledge and such fortunes.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301, Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has said “I have one aim—to have natural love and devotion for the Lord and be able to serve him without any selfish interest or goal, without expecting anything in return, such as the legendary fruits or rewards (in the form of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha) that would automatically accrue due to such service.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265 it is clearly stated that “Raghupati (Lord Ram, the king of the Raghu dynasty) is overwhelmed by the devotion of his devotees, and he finds himself obliged to such devotees.”]

सो सुतंत्र अवलंब न आना । तेहि आधीन ग्यान बिग्याना ॥ ३ ॥

sō sutantra avalamba na ānā. tēhi ādhīna gyāna bigyānā. 3.

It (i.e. Bhakti) is independent, able to stand alone, fully empowered (to fulfill all the spiritual requirements of the aspirant), and is self-sufficient as it does not require or expect any other support to prop it up, to enhance its value and effectiveness.

On the contrary, Gyan and Vigyan are dependent upon Bhakti. [In other words, if one were to have access to Gyan and Vigyan, i.e. enlightenment and awareness of the reality and truth in a convincing, logical and effective manner, then he must have the virtue of Bhakti ingrained in him. Without being qualified in the spiritual field of Bhakti a spiritual aspirant cannot hope to fully benefit from either Gyan or Vidyan.] (3)

[Note—Bhakti does not depend upon Dharma, Gyan, Vairagya or Yoga to lead the aspirant to his spiritual objective. Bhakti can do it independently on its own, on its own steam, and without seeking any help from any other spiritual tool. But Gyan or enlightenment as well as Vigyan or in-depth knowledge of the spiritual truth depends upon Bhakti. This is obviously because the term ‘Bhakti’ means to have faith and devotion, and to succeed in any endeavour one must have complete faith and confidence that the goal he has chosen for himself is the best goal in the world, a goal which will give him his desired fruits in their best form, that the medium he has chosen to reach this goal is also the best, the easiest and a well-established way of reaching the desired goal, and that it will be better for him to concentrate all his energy and efforts to reach the goal without getting distracted by so many way-side distractions that may divert his attention. Bhakti serves this purpose. It is easy, it is proved to be a time-tested, efficient and effective tool, and it is enough to follow this path without having to seek help from any other tools.]

On the other hand, Gyan and Vigyan require a high degree of mental abilities, proficiency and focus in order to give the desired result. A person who has the aptitude for Yoga and acquisition of knowledge by studying the scriptures deeply can benefit from Gyan and Vigyan. These paths have many pitfalls and are arduous. Bhakti, on the other hand, is so easy and convenient that it can be followed even by an ordinary creature who would otherwise fail miserably if he were to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul by following the other paths.]

भगति तात अनुपम सुखमूला । मिलइ जो संत होई अनुकूला ॥ ४ ॥

bhagati tāta anupama sukhamūlā. mila'i jō santa hō'im' anukūlā. 4.

Oh dear (brother Laxman)! Bhakti is pristine, unique, incomparable, awesome and fabulous. It is a fount from which sprouts happiness, bliss and peace; it is a harbinger of these glorious virtues; it is the root from which arises the grand tree that gives the aspirant the spiritual rewards represented by these eclectic virtues.

[And how is Bhakti obtained or accessed?] Attaining Bhakti is possible, it is made accessible when ‘Sants’ (saintly, pious, holy, devout, spiritually pure and enlightened people) become pleased with the seeker of Bhakti, when they are favourable towards him, and bless him with this virtue. (4)

[Note—The glories, honours, powers and virtues of *Sants* or saints have been enumerated and lauded in Ram Charit Mans. References: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 5-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38; (vi) Doha no. 46 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 46.

In Tulsidas’ Vairagya Sandipani, the saints are extensively praised in its verse nos. 8-33.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, canto 3, verse no. 37-39, the characteristics of a truly pious and holy man are the following:--

“Those persons who are even-minded and stable, have equanimity and forbearance, are serene, placid, unruffled, unwavering, calm and balanced under adversities as well as favourable circumstances, both during sorrows, sufferings and troubles as well as under happy and joyous situations in this world; those who are without any desires and wants whatsoever; those who do not have any attachment to their worldly assets such as their wealth and sons, nor harbour any desires pertaining to them; those who have restrained, conquered and suppressed their sense

organs and their wayward tendencies or the urge for their gratification; those who are of a serene, calm, peaceful and tranquil temperament and mind; those who are sincerely devoted and dedicated to you; those who are devoid of and free from all desires, greed, avarice, yearnings and ambitions of all kinds (37); those who are even-keeled, have equanimity, remain neutral, unaffected, indifferent and aloof even while going through the throes of destruction (unfavourable circumstances) or construction (favourable circumstances); those who are without encumbrances and attachments of any kind; those who abandon and forsake involvement in all types of worldly deeds and getting involved in various actions, i.e. do not regard himself as the 'doer' of any deed, nor expects any reward or punishment for it; those who are always the followers of Brahm (i.e. pursue the path of righteousness that leads to the supreme, eternal One) (38); those who are endowed with 'Yam' and other virtues (e.g. self-restraint of passions and doing penances and austerities); and those who are contented and satisfied with whatever comes their way—such persons who possess these virtues are truly 'Sadhus' (saintly, pious, holy, divine, pure in mind and heart). Whenever one is fortunate to get communion and a chance to interact with such saints, one develops endearment for and interest in your divine stories (i.e. in spiritualism) (39)".

Bhakti is 'incomparable, unique, awesome and fabulous' because no other mean is as effective and easy as Bhakti to help the spiritual aspirant reach his spiritual goal with the least amount of hassle and facing the least number of troubles. It leads to the best form of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, from this entrapping world and its delusions, as well as its cycle of birth and death and their attendant horrors. It is easy to follow because it does not entail the severity of Yoga and Sanyas, or the high level of mental intellectual requirements needed to succeed in acquisition of Gyan and Vigyan, or being one one's toe in the course of doing one's deeds conscientious and righteously in accordance with the laws of Dharma, and so on.

In fact, these benefits come to a person who has Bhakti in him in a natural and automatic manner, without any special effort to be made on his part. The obvious reason for this is that Bhakti makes a man surrender himself to the Supreme Being, and his care and well-being henceforth becomes the responsibility of the Lord. It is like the case of a child putting himself in the care of its loving parent; then the child has nothing to worry about, except, of course, to remain obedient, faithful and loyal to his parent, to have complete confidence in the parent that the latter is sure to take proper care of the child's future. This sort of unflinching and sincere commitment makes it obligatory upon the guardian to be extra vigilant for the welfare of his ward, because now the ward's doing and undoing, his success and rise or failure and fall will have a direct bearing upon the guardian's own credibility and competence.

Therefore, the devotee of the Lord, known as the 'Bhakta', lives peacefully and happily without a worry in the world as he has the Supreme Being himself worrying on his behalf! He sings like a lark the glories of the Lord, songs that are known as 'Bhajan'. All living beings want happiness, bliss, peace and comfort, and towards this aim they strive hard in this world. If he gets these much sought-after fruits or rewards in an easy way, and that too in a form which is sustainable and having immensity of dimension and depth, then there is no reason why he would not clasp it with both his hands. This is precisely the benefit of following the path of Bhakti. Mukti is attained easily by leaving everything in the hands of the Lord, and instead of wasting time worrying about so many things of this world the living being can now use the same time to live merrily by singing the Bhajans of the Lord.

'The person is greatly affected by the company he keeps'—this axiomatic principle is also applicable in the case of a student of Bhakti, the spiritual aspirant who wishes to adopt Bhakti has his chosen spiritual path from amongst the so many varied paths prescribed by the scriptures. Company of saints creates a positive environment conducive to spiritual pursuits. The saints practice Bhakti for the Lord, and their life is a living example of the benefits one gets by having Bhakti. So when a new aspirant keeps their company and watches them closely, he is convinced of the rewards that accompany Bhakti; he sees how Bhakti can be done in practical terms, and what kind of ecstasy is derived by constant communion with the Lord. In other words,

the seeker of Bhakti sees it being demonstrated in practical life when he lives in the company of saints.]

भगति कि साधन कहउँ बखानी । सुगम पंथ मोहि पावहिं प्रानी ॥ ५ ॥

bhagati ki sādhanā kaha'um̐ bakhānī. sugama pantha mōhi pāvahim̐ prānī. 5.

I (Lord Ram) shall now tell you (Laxman) in detail the way Bhakti can be obtained or accessed. It is an easy path, a convenient way by which a living being can attain me, the Supreme Being. [That is, by adopting Bhakti, the seeker can find his spiritual liberation and deliverance, his emancipation and salvation very easily and conveniently. He can merge his own Atma with the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma by the means of Bhakti.] (5)

[Note—After having first stressed that Bhakti is the easiest and most convenient way of attaining oneness with the Lord, or of obtaining freedom from this world and its horrors and entanglements, the Lord now outlines how Bhakti can be actually developed, how it can be actually accessed and practiced.

As has been said in an earlier note, Bhakti is 'easy and convenient' because now the spiritual future and welfare of the practitioner of Bhakti becomes the responsibility of the Lord God. It is like a child putting himself in the caring hands of his parent. Once this is done, the child becomes carefree, and he can now enjoy the pleasures of life without any worry about his future or daily needs. Likewise, once one has Bhakti, the Lord becomes responsible for his welfare and daily needs.]

प्रथमहिं बिप्र चरन अति प्रीती । निज निज कर्म निरत श्रुति रीती ॥ ६ ॥

prathamahim̐ bipra carana ati prītī. nija nija karma nirata śruti rītī. 6.

The first requirement is that a person who desires Bhakti should have respect and affection for the feet of a Vipra.

[A 'Vipra' literally means a person who is born in the social class that is known as Brahmin. But the intention here is different. We are dealing with Bhakti, so only a person who practices Bhakti is to be considered fit as being referred to as a Vipra here. The Brahmins have been traditionally given high regard in Hindu society because they used to be wise men who had a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, and therefore were the best sources for information and guidance. Like the case when a student would go to a teacher specializing in the subject in which the student wishes to be taught, the seeker of Bhakti should also go to a Brahmin or Vipra who himself practices Bhakti. Any other person would not be a proper guide for the seeker of Bhakti. Hence, the term 'Vipra' would mean a pious and holy person who worships the Lord God with extreme devotion and has surrendered himself to the Lord. In other words, only a Vipra who has Bhakti in him can become a seeker's correct preceptor and guide.]

The second requirement is to follow the instructions and edicts of the Vedas diligently to lead a life of righteousness and probity in all affairs and in accordance with established traditions and the laws and tenets prescribed for the 'Varna' or the section of society to which the person belongs.

[That is, to live according the various laws of conduct as prescribed by the scriptures to regulate and maintain discipline across the different sections of the society, known as the ‘Varnas’, be conscientious in following one’s duties and responsibilities as sanctioned for the respective Varna to which the person belongs, and to voluntarily maintain order and decorum of the Varna to which a person belongs—this is the second way of practicing Bhakti. It is the second practical path of Bhakti.] (6)

[Note— In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of adoring and having devotion for the holy feet of saints. Valmiki says “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society).”

We see that in this verse, two paths have been outlined—one is to respect the elderly and learned men who are experienced in Bhakti and learn from them the practical way of doing Bhakti, and the second is to live an orderly life according to established tradition.

In other words, one must pay respects to those who are learned and senior, because when they are pleased they will be eager to initiate the new entrant in this spiritual fold and guide him along with sincere and good advice. Similarly, when one follows the well established laws of conduct and doing deeds righteously and in accordance with established procedures ordained by the scriptures, he will find all avoidable problems automatically removed from his path, making the journey to his goal easier and less troublesome.

Why must one follow the path shown by the scriptures? Well, the scriptures show that path that is correct and apt; they have no vested interests to mislead anyone. The external world is overshadowed by misconceptions and delusions, and the mind and intellect of any living being are affected by the numerous corruptions and taints of this world. The advice that one gets from anyone, except the wise and enlightened ones, is not reliable, and there are greater chances of one falling in the same trap in which the advisor has himself fallen. So it is not good and prudent to risk one’s future with such uncertain path, especially when an option of sure-hit and time-tested right and correct path is available in the form of the scriptures. No sensible man would like to jeopardize his entire life and risking his well-being by following a doubtful path when an option that is certain and sure is available at hand.

That is why it is advised in this verse that one should have the company of saints and follow the scriptures because both these two options are sure to take a spiritual aspirant to the correct goal along the correct path.

Now, let us read about the concept of ‘Varnas’ and ‘Vipra or Brahmin’.

The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

In ancient Indian tradition, the kings and the ruling class belonged to the caste called 'Kshatriya', and their main job/vocation was giving protection and providing sustenance to their subjects belonging to the other three castes. To do this, they had to wage wars—some in defense and some in aggression because they wanted to expand their area of influence. But wars nevertheless involved bloodshed which any peace loving soul of Satwic tendency would abhor. So a king could be Satwic by temperament but Rajsic by occupation and compulsion. Those who were Satwic were prescribed the non-violent method of worship and sacrifices to Goddess Durga during peace times as described in Devipurana Mahabharat, Canto 46, verse nos. 15-17½, while those of Rajsic bearings were to do worship requiring animal sacrifices as described in verse nos. 17-21, especially in preparation for and during wars. Even today it is observed that the army is non-vegetarian in its food habits because the soldiers cannot kill their enemies in battle—as is required of them because of their vocation as a soldier—if they avoid killing and instead show mercy and compassion on their enemies. Perhaps this is the reason why meat-eating is never looked down in army; in fact, it is a normal diet amongst the Kshatriya class. Though mercy and compassion are indeed supremely good qualities, they are not meant for the battlefield unless the enemy surrenders and relents. The world would have been a 'heaven-on-earth' if this quality prevailed in the battlefield! However, since Sri Ram was at war with a vicious, unforgiving, cruel and formidable enemy (Ravana), and a lot was at stake (e.g. the very existence of the world and its peace), and it was a no-holds-barred, fierce and uncompromising war, the second category of worship—animal sacrifice symbolising the death of the enemy—was prescribed for him by the Goddess. And this was precisely what Brahma and other Gods did as is evident in verse nos. 33.

Yajur Veda 31st Chapter, 11th Mantra says that Brahmins are the mouth of society, the Kshatriyas are its arms, Vaishyas are its stomach or abdomen, and Shudras are its legs. The body is regarded as a symbol of the society. As is obvious in this analogy, all these four units of the body must function properly and in close cooperation with each other in order that the body can survive and live comfortably and carry on with its assigned duties in an orderly fashion. The mouth is important because it is the medium by which the body takes food and speaks; the arms procure food and give protection to the body against enemies; the stomach digests food and supplies the whole body with the energy needed by it; the abdomen holds all the internal organs; and the legs carry the body wherever it wants to go such as the place where food is available. Since food is the basis necessity of life, this instance is cited here. And the logic can be extended to everything else. Each component of the society must work properly in order that the whole society survives; each component is as vital as the other; each has its own importance in the bigger picture.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'—be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'—should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'—be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'—to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'—to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'—to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'—to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'—one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'—to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 10.

The Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, paragraph no. 7 describes in a holistic way the virtues of a true Brahmin as the one who is highly wise, self-realised, erudite and enlightened about the Atma and the principles governing the true meaning of Brahmin and such religious signs as doing fire sacrifices, wearing the sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head, observing sacraments etc.

To quote this Upanishad—‘A true Brahmin is a wise and enlightened person who treats the Atma, the pure consciousness, as the non-dual Principal of creation (i.e. who regards the Atma as a personification of the supreme Brahman that is non-dual or Advaita and the only supreme Authority of creation), and for whom being steady in his meditation and contemplation as well as spiritual pursuit is the symbolic tuft of hair—such a person is deemed to be cleansed and made holy by whatever he does. This is because all his deeds are deemed to be auspicious and holy. [That is, he need not do special deeds such as fire sacrifices or observing of sacraments in order to wash off his sins or any kind of spiritual taints that might be adhering to him.]

He is deemed to have completed doing all religious and auspicious deeds required to be done by a man.

It must be understood that such an enlightened man is indeed a Brahmin for he is dedicated and devoted to Brahman (the Supreme Being), he is no less than a God, he is indeed a ‘Rishi’ (or a great sage), he is a ‘Tapasvi’ (or someone who is well endowed with the glorious virtues of Tapa, i.e. austerity and penance, and is steadfast in observing its tenets), he is the best follower of the tenets of the scriptures and an excellent spiritual aspirant, he is therefore the Guru (guide, teacher and preceptor) for the whole world.

A truly wise, enlightened and self-realised aspirant who understands the implications and import of what has been said above realises the truth of the statement that the pure conscious Atma standing for Brahman is the true identity of his. And therefore such an enlightened man declares ‘It (Brahman; Atma; Truth; Consciousness) is me’.

The Pashupat Brahman Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 19 describes who a true Brahmin is as follows—“A true Brahmin is one who wears the Yagya Sutra (the sacred thread worn during the performance of fire sacrifices, especially the symbolic one as narrated in verse no. 16), who employs the Pranav Mantra (i.e. the OM Mantra) for his religious needs (such as when doing Japa or repetition, Yoga or meditation, Dhyana or contemplation, etc.), and who is well-versed in the principles of Brahman Yagya (spiritual practices which are equivalent to a formal fire sacrifice but done in a subtle and symbolic manner which lead directly to the realisation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth known as Brahman).

The Gods (the term is a metaphor for the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, nobility etc.) are to be found in the diligent observance of the principles that define a man as a Brahmin. [That is, if a man is a true Brahmin as outlined above, he is deemed to be living God in the sense that he would possess all the eclectic virtues that collectively defined as being ‘godly’.]

The Hans (the enlightened Atma, the self-realised and Brahman-realised person) who adheres to the principles of Sutra (i.e. who follows the tenets that lead to Brahman-realisation, who offers his obeisance to the Supreme Being in the manner outlined in this Upanishad, who leads a life like a true Brahmin as described above) is deemed to be doing the Yagya (the fire sacrifice).

There is no difference between the Hans and Pranav. That is, there is no difference between the immaculate Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ known as the Hans, and the supreme transcendental Brahman known as Pranav. [Brahman is the cosmic Consciousness that produces vibrations of life in the ether that are heard in the form of Naad. These dynamic vibrations in the cosmic ether produce sound that is encapsulated in the monosyllabic word OM. Hence, the OM is a sound form or the cosmic Naad known as Pranav which stands for Brahman because it is the latter which has generated this sound. If the Atma is personified as a divine Swan known as Hans, the supreme cosmic Atma known as Brahman is personified in the form of Pranav which is a cosmic sound called Pranav, and which is represented by the word OM. Refer verse no. 17 and 20 of this Canto 1 of the Pashupat Brahman Upanishad in this context.] (19).”

The Par Brahman Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 8-13 describe who *is* a true Brahmin, and verse no. 14 describes who *is not*. Now, let us examine what these verses say.

First let us see *who is not a true Brahmin*:--“Verse no. 14 = Those Brahmins who are engrossed merely in performing rituals and observing sacraments, or who are engaged in the mundane affairs of the world are Brahmins only for name’s sake (and not true Brahmins), because they live only to fill their stomachs and enjoy the fame, comforts and pleasures that come with worldly respect. Such people go to hell at the end of their lives.

[That is, they continue to take birth and die again, and during each life they undergo sufferings and miseries that are part and parcel of gross mundane existence. They do not find Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance, nor do they find peace and bliss that comes with self and Brahm realisation. They do not have true Gyan, and are only pretending to have it to fulfill their worldly desires. In short, they are not true Brahmins, they are imposters, and they do not do justice to the institution of Brahm-hood. They give the holy stature of being a Brahmin a bad name.

The question arises, who then is a true Brahmin? The answer is self-evident in the foregoing as well as the following verses. That is, only those who have true knowledge of Brahm, and the depth of wisdom and enlightenment to understand what the term ‘Brahm’ is all about, who do not hanker after external purity and formalities but lay stress on inner cleansing and sincerity of purpose are true Brahmins. Such people would not be much bothered about sporting a tuft on the head or wearing the sacred thread to prove that they are Brahmins, but would instead strive to inculcate the glorious virtues that are so typical of those who have become self and Brahm realised, who have really understood the truth and reality of things.] (14).”

Now, let us see *who is a true Brahmin*:—

“verse no. 8 = A person who has understood the real and true import of the term ‘Sutra’ (literally the sacred thread as well as the formula that unfolds the path of Brahm-realisation) is the one who is eligible to attain Moksha (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation), is a true Bhikshuk (a monk, a mendicant or a friar), is truly a Vedagya (one who is an expert in the Vedas and their tenets), is Sadachari (one who follows the path of truth and auspiciousness), and is a Vipra (a Brahmin; a learned and elderly man).

Such a man is not only holy himself but also makes those with whom he comes in contact holy and pure (8).

“verse no. 9 = The supreme transcendental Brahm who is the thread that has knitted together all the units of creation and holds them in place like beads in a rosary or a garland, the ascetic who wears this sacred thread (i.e. who accepts Brahm as the basic essence of creation and honours Brahm exclusively) is indeed said to be an expert ascetic who is well-versed in the philosophy of Yoga (9).

“verse no. 10 = A Brahmin, an expert ascetic who is well-versed in Yoga, and a person who is wise, learned and enlightened should abandon the external sacred thread, because the real thread that bestows spiritual liberation and deliverance is not the external thread made of a gross material (e.g. cotton thread or silk thread) but the symbolic sacred thread representing Brahm that is worn (accepted) internally.

When the sacred thread representing Brahm is symbolically worn internally, there is no fear of it ever getting defiled or polluted; it would permanently be holy and pure (10).

“verse no. 11 = Those who wear the sacred thread after fully understanding its metaphysical importance and spiritual significance, those who have realised that this sacred thread represents Brahm in its entirety are the ones who wear it in the true sense, and therefore are eligible for the benefits that accrue by wearing it. [For the rest, it is merely a formality that can fool the world into believing that the wearer is a holy man, and nothing more. It would not serve them any real purpose except worldly praise.] (11).

“verse no. 12 = Those who wear the Shikha and the Sutra as symbols of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment which kindles spiritual awakening and truth-realisation) regard Gyan as the best thing in this world to acquire and aim for. This is because Gyan is the holiest and the purest thing in this world. [It shows the correct path to the aspirant, and never misleads him for some vested self-interest.] (12).

“verse no. 13 = Those who are wise and enlightened assert that those persons who understand that the Shikha (tuft of hair on the head) is as powerful and potent as the fire element itself are the ones who are true wearers of it. For the rest, they are merely sporting a crop of hair on the head, and nothing more (13).”

These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped as well as feels the pain equally if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. The four classes had specific jobs cut for them so that the society could function smoothly.

The Brahmins have their origin from the mouth of Brahma the creator. Since the mouth is used to give advice and teach others, the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exist, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas, who were created from the arms of Brahma, were those sons of his who would give the needed protection and security to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour to provide for the maintenance and financial and material well being of the society for merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life. So he created the Vaishyas from his thighs, symbolising labour, to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras created from Brahma's feet symbolising service.

Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 and Canto 2, verse nos. 3 describe how the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama were used by the supreme Brahm to create different types of creatures in this creation. In the context of human beings, it would translate into the four groups into which the society was classified to indicate variations in the level of their general mental, intellectual and emotional development, their thought processes, temperaments, behaviours and bearings. Brahm stands for ‘truth and enlightenment’, and intelligent thinking as opposed to emotional and impulsive behaviour. All living beings that came into existence have ‘conscious life’ in them in as much as they show some or the other sign that are characteristics of life in its myriad forms. But all forms of life cannot be treated as exalted and highly evolved because they lack the divine and eclectic virtues of having wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge that enables them to think intelligently, rationally, logically and analytically; all forms of creatures cannot discriminate between what is spiritually acceptable and what is not, they cannot decide for themselves the path to choose which would help them break the cycle of birth and death. This privilege is the exclusive domain of the human being. That is why humans are placed at the top rung of the evolutionary ladder. This is also why it is said that the Viraat Purush had revealed himself in his image of the human body, that the human body is a replica of the Viraat Purush. Now if this is the case, then only those amongst the humans who possess the highest and noblest virtues of wisdom, erudition,

enlightenment, intelligence and the ability to discriminate between the bad and the good on the one hand, and the grand virtues of having compassion, love, kindness and mercy, of having total devotion, faith and dedication towards the Truth and following this Truth with whole hearted diligence, of sincerely endeavouring to break free from the shackle of ignorance and delusions that had been trapping their soul for generations after generations on the other hand, can be truthfully and honestly called manifestations of Brahm, or an image of the Viraat Purush. Brahm has revealed himself in all the creatures of this creation, but what sets the humans apart from the rest of the creatures is the possession of the grand and magnificent virtues of Brahm in their best of forms, in the best of their vibrancy, vigour and colour. The human being depicts the powers, potentials and authority of the supreme Lord in all its majestic and grandiose form, and that is why the human being has been able to rule over the rest of the creation as its unquestioned master and lord.

This brings us to an interesting conclusion—if the human being is not able to display any of these noble, virtuous and divine qualities that he has inherited from Brahm as his image then there would be no difference between this human and the other creatures who are lower down in the evolutionary ladder. This is also why amongst the humans the Brahmins are regarded as the closest representatives of Brahm because they are deemed to possess the eclectic and holy virtues of Brahm in the highest ratio as compared to their other brethren. They have all the three Gunas in them, but the ratio of Sata Guna in them is higher than other two Gunas, making them as exalted, revered and honourable as Brahm. It does not imply that others are not images of Brahm, for there is nothing in creation that is not Brahm, but it is just that the degree and proportion of virtuous qualities that are hallmarks of Brahm are present in a greater proportion in Brahmins than other classes in society. All the creatures have their own individual place in creation, but even as all the subjects of a kingdom have their duties and position clearly marked out in order to maintain order and hierarchy, and all of them cannot claim to be called a 'king' and they cannot enjoy the same privileges as enjoyed by the king, all the other classes of the human race as well as the rest of the creatures cannot be treated alike.

Further, all creature have the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama in varying ratios, thereby establishing their relationship with Brahm, because the off spring acquires the genes of the parent. When all the three Gunas were present in equal proportion in Brahm, he was neutral, detached and did not depict any attributes as all the three Gunas cancelled each other out. The nearest analogy to visualise this is the ordinary sunlight—there are seven colours in it, but they cancel each other in such a way that we cannot discern them in their distinctive individual forms, but what we see is the colourless dazzling light of the sun. This divine and pious form of Brahm is revealed in the renunciate ascetics, hermits, monks, friars, sages and seers, and other enlightened and self-realised persons who are regarded even higher than the Brahmins because they depict the best of virtues of Brahm, and that is also why they are called 'Brahm personified'. They represent Brahm's best form in existence. But with the polarization of Brahm's Gunas, the myriad creation and its inhabitant creatures came into being, each very different from the other and depicting Brahm's various Gunas in varying stages of polarization.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/11-15 which describes their origin in graphic details, and also Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

Reasons for classification—The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 10 states the reason for the classification of the society in four classes as follows—"The skin, blood, flesh, bones and the Atma/soul have no caste, creed, colour or race. These have been

conceived as a practical measure to regulate and control our day to day behaviours and interactions with each other (10).

[Note—This is an important verse which clearly states that all are equal in the eyes of the scriptures. The different classes or castes or sects or creeds or races which the society has been divided and classified into are man made and artificial. It is just for the sake of convenience of the purpose of delineation of duties and to lay down procedure and guidelines for mutual interactions and determine one's specific place in the hierarchy of existence even as we have a system of hierarchical governance in place in modern society. For example, a Brahmin was supposed to be the teacher and guide for the rest of the society, and the Kshatriya was supposed to give protection to it, while its finances and material needs were looked after by the Vaishya, and it was manually served by the Shudra. This delegation of duties and responsibilities demanded that each person belonging to a particular class should adhere to the laws and regulations meant for that particular class to ensure uninterrupted carrying out of duties and prevention of friction and overlapping of functions causing unnecessary tension and duplicity. This segregation was therefore meant to make life regulated and easy, and not to say that one man was in anyway superior to another in terms of his essential being as a human and a living creature. This is because the Atma or soul, which is pure and conscious, is one in all the creatures, whether he is a man or a woman, a Brahmin or a Shudra. Further, other components of the body, such as the skin, blood etc., are obviously the same in all humans, and if taken in their fundamental and essential form they are the same in all living creatures, whether they are humans or animals. For example, blood when analysed in a chemical laboratory will show the same principal constituents whether it is taken from a Brahmin or from a Kshatriya; blood's constituents would remain the same for all segments of society. Similarly, skin and other parts of the body have no basic difference. The visible and other apparent differences that appear in different forms of life which are fundamentally the same is also supported by the Upanishads when they say that the Atma assumes different forms depending upon its past deeds and their accumulated effects, but the essential form of this Atma remains the same nevertheless. When we talk of 'life' we mean the entire living kingdom consisting of the plants and the animals, including the humans. This is the holistic view of the Upanishads.]

Origin of the four Varnas—The Param Hans Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 1 says that Brahma the creator had learned about the four Varnas and the laws governing them from his father Lord Adi Narayan, i.e. from Lord Vishnu in his primary form as Lord Viraat Purush from whose navel Brahma was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from it.

The Subalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse 6, and Canto 2, verse 1 describes the origin of these four classes in society. Let us see what it has to say on the subject.

“Verse no. 6, Canto 1—From this Brahma, the creator, emerged the rest of the creation as follows:--From his mouth came into being the Brahmins; from his arms were created the Kshatriyas; from his thighs evolved the Vaishyas; and from his legs were created the Shudras. From his Mana (mind) came into being the Moon; from his eyes evolved the Sun; from the ears arose the external wind (present in the entire cosmos) as well as the Pran (the vital wind in the form of breath that sustains life, as also the other vital winds that control other functions of the body of a creature); and finally from his heart sprouted the rest of creation [6].

{Note—(1) These four classes of the human race were created from the single father, the Viraat or Brahma. Their origins are indicative of the different jobs that they were assigned so as to enable the creator perform the task of governance efficiently just like a king assigns separate jobs to his different ministers. But it must be clearly understood here that each class of the human race

was like a part of the body of the Supreme Being, and even as a man feels disfigured and handicapped and equal intensity of pain if his leg is cut off from the rest of his body as he feels when his arm or head is severed, the Lord feels betrayed and hurt when even one of his sons is subjected to humiliation and pain. All are equal in his eyes. The four classes had specific jobs cut out for them so that the society could function smoothly.

Mouth is used to give advice and teach; hence the primary job of the Brahmins was to act as moral guide to their brethren. The four Vedas, which are repository of all knowledge that exists, were also created from the mouth of Brahma; hence these Brahmins were considered most wise and learned because they represented the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Vedas. The arms are metaphors for strength and powers; they are used to protect and help others. Hence, the Kshatriyas were those sons of Brahma who would do the needed by affording protection to their other brethren. In order to feed his creation, Brahma had to toil and labour; merely teaching and protecting would not suffice without some one to take care of the other necessities of life, such as production and distribution of food and generation of wealth to provide basic comforts. So he created the Vaishyas to pick up the mantle of mundane affairs of life on his behalf. But there must be someone who would do the daily chores and the service part, such as tilling the fields, doing the harvesting, washing and cleaning, and all other such odd jobs. This was assigned to the Shudras.

None of these classes were meant to be inferior or superior to one another; they were all parts of the body of the same Brahma. In fact, the leg bears the burden of the body; just imagine what would have happened if Brahma had not created anyone from his legs? How would the Brahmin walk, how would the Kshatriya fight, and how would the Vaishya do his commercial activities if he could not walk? Similar arguments can be applied to other classes. See also Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 1/4/11-13, and Aitereyo-panishad, 1/1/4.

(2) The moon stands for emotions and sentiments of a creature, hence its origin in the Mana which is the epicenter of all emotive thoughts. The sun shows light to the world, hence its symbolic origin in the eye of the creator. The ears hear sound from all the directions, and sound has its origin in waves which travel in space through the medium of the ether, because sound cannot be either heard or can reach any place without any medium. This medium was called the wind, and since the ears make the presence of sound evident, the wind or air has its origin in the ears of Brahma. These ears are physically shaped like a radar or satellite dish antenna because they not only transmit sound waves but also receive them. They are like a 2-way radio receiver. And of course, the world has any relevance and importance if only the heart loves it and wishes to be enamoured with it. Once the heart starts to loathe it, or becomes dispassionate towards it, the world becomes irrelevant; therefore the world becomes non-existent as far as the creature is concerned.}

“Verse no. 1, Canto 2—From the creator’s Apan wind (the vital wind which is inhaled and moves down in the body, thereby helping in digestion and excretory functions) was created the ‘Nishad’ community (the boatmen and elephant tamers), the ‘Yakshas’ (a type of demi-God who guards the treasure of the Gods), the ‘Rakshas’ (the ones with evil, pervert, sinful and demonic tendencies), and the ‘Gandharvas’ (celestial musicians; those junior Gods who were lower in the hierarchy of heavenly Gods).

From the bones of the creator were formed the mountains; from his body hairs came into being the members of the botanical kingdom, the various plants and vegetations, including the medicinal herbs; and from his forehead creased with anger evolved the God of wrath, or ‘Rudra’ [1].

{Note—(1) The Nishad community was considered lower than the Shudras. In practical terms this refers to the fact that these people stayed outside the villages and cities, and had little interaction with those people who were regarded as more educated and cultured. The fishermen and others who took care of animals, such as horses, elephants etc. also belonged to this group.

The Yaksha was the guard of the God's treasury; here they were assigned the job of protecting the assets that would be generated by the other classes in social hierarchy. The society had all types of people; some of them were wicked and evil. They were the Rakshas. And the Gandharva was a soul who had aspired to be as exalted as a God but somewhere went astray from his path and became a junior God. All these designations imply that the creation created by the creator had all shades of creatures in it, and all of them were his sons because all were formed from a part of his body.

(2) Obviously Brahma got annoyed when his sons started bickering among themselves. So he got angry, and his forehead creased in annoyance. This metamorphosed into Rudra. The word Rudra means anger, wrath, vehemence etc. This Rudra was the God of tempest and destruction. He is also identified with Kaal or time and death, because Rudra sparked annihilation when the opportune time for destruction came. The terrible shaft of Rudra brings death and disease to cattle and man, just like plague/pestilence mentioned in the Holy Bible.}"

Colour of the skin—It ought to be noted here that the genesis of creation as outlined by the Upanishads describe the colour of the skin of the creatures that came into being. The colour of the skin was used symbolically to indicate the dominance of one or the other of the three basic Gunas, the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, in a particular individual that determines to which class of society he belongs, and which formed the basis of this classification which depend heavily on the quality displayed by an individual to become eligible to belong to one or the other class. The Gunas displayed by him holds a greater importance than his mere birth in a particular section.

For example, in Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition it is said that Maya, which has created this entire world by its delusion creating powers, has the following three colours—white (fair; grey; all the light shades), dark (brown, black, yellowish and all shades of colours that are not essentially white) and blood red (or copper colour). Since the offspring gets the colour of the skin of the parent because the colour often is indicative of the race to which a particular species belongs, there would therefore be creatures having these three basic colours in varying hues and shades. Now what is the significance of these three colours? These *three colours* represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures. Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means 'dark' and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word 'red' is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour 'white' stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons. Refer also Shewata-shwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 4-5; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3; Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 5 in this context.]

एहि कर फल पुनि बिषय बिरागा । तब मम धर्म उपज अनुरागा ॥ ७ ॥

ēhi kara phala puni biṣaya birāgā. taba mama dharma upaja anurāgā. 7.

The eclectic reward or fruit of this effort (i.e. having company of saints and leading a life according to the tenets of the Vedas or scriptures) is that one develops a deep and sincere sense of Vairagya from this world and the temptations of its material sense objects. The spiritual aspirant develops aversion to the world and its temptations for pleasures of the

senses (because he understands that they will trap him in an endless cycle of miseries and torments from which he will find difficult to extricate himself later on).

[That is, by remaining in the company of saints and study of scriptures to learn how one should lead a life that is considered good, one becomes aware of many things in life that he would have missed otherwise. For instance he begins to realise that true happiness and bliss comes not from pursuing the material objects of the world or appeasing the sense organs of the body but by seeking it inside his own self in the Atma that is a fountainhead of eternal bliss, peace and happiness, the Atma that is pure and unadulterated consciousness as compared to the world and its sense objects that are gross and inane.

With the dawn of wisdom and realisation of the spiritual truth, one develops true renunciation, detachment and dispassion from all material sense objects of the world as well as the urge for self-gratification that arises from the sense organs. One begins to see that the world and its objects can never give true happiness and bliss. Whatever illusion of happiness and comfort that is created by this world to lure the creature towards it are like the bait shown to the fish to catch the latter. Besides this, since the world is imaginary and transient, all its charms and objects are also imaginary and transient. A wise man realises that none of such things that are temporary themselves can ever give him a fruit or reward that is long-lasting and real.]

When this happens, i.e. when Vairagya develops and takes a firm root in an aspirant's inner-self, the spiritual aspirant develops affection and a desire to follow the path leading to 'me'—i.e. the path leading to the Supreme Being, the path of one's liberation and deliverance from this world and all its tentacles, a path that would provide the aspirant his desired goal of emancipation and salvation, a path that would help him steer clear of all the pitfalls that come in his way to freedom, a path that is lit with the light of wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation that removes all forms of darkness symbolizing ignorance, a path that lifts his Spirit from the gross and temporal plane to the plane that has an ethereal, sublime and subtle dimension. This is known as the path to God-hood.

[By developing Vairagya, one distances himself from the artificial world and its equally artificial pleasures, and instead seeks happiness and bliss that is true and eternal by turning himself to the Lord who symbolizes or personifies the grand virtue of eternal bliss, happiness and peace that the spiritual aspirant so much longs to attain.] (7)

[Note—When one follows the path shown by saints and scriptures, it is natural that his conduct and thoughts will be cleansed of all worldly taints and corruptions. Once he tastes the nectar of true contentedness, happiness and peace that comes by following a life of auspiciousness and righteousness as opposed to remaining engrossed in the pursuit of this selfish world and its cunning sense objects that act like the bait to catch the fish, he will voluntarily distance himself from the latter and turn towards the former.

'Vairagya' does not mean one must run away from the world and shirk his responsibilities. True Vairagya means one must not be attached or hooked to, or affected by any of the things of this world, or by the results of his deeds and actions in this world. Vairagya comes from within and not from without. Say, if the mind and heart are attracted towards the charms of the world and one forces himself to run away to the forest in the guise of a hermit, will such act serve any purpose except to increase his yearning and lust for the world instead of eliminating them? Forced Vairagya serves no purpose as it only stokes desires, greed, lust and passions further. It enhances his cravings instead of dousing them. The benefit from Vairagya

comes only when it sprouts from within, when it is sincere, and when it is centered round wisdom and realisation of the truth and reality.

For instance, when one wishes to rise in life by being educated and acquiring skills, he will leave no stone unturned to acquire the best education that is available to him and be diligent and steadfast in his studies. Even if such a sincere student may not have the wherewithal for studying in a reputed college, he will still shine in life. On the contrary, if someone is forced into school or college by his parents or family or peer pressure though he has no earnest desire to study and acquire education and skills, then his learning and education will be mediocre at the best. He will spend his time in a fidgety manner, frittering it away and not deriving any worthwhile benefit from the opportunity that he has got to study in a good college.

Again, when one is really hungry he will enjoy food, no matter how bland it is, and this food is properly absorbed by the body as it is properly digested due to secretion of saliva and digested juices. On the other hand, if one eats even delicious things without having real appetite then this food will harm his body more than doing it any good. So likewise, if one has developed Vairagya in a sincere manner, out of realisation of the truth, then it will be steady and robust. Otherwise it will only create more problems for him.

The way leading to the Lord is very easy if one has developed Vairagya because then whatever one does is not done to serve one's own self interest but to serve the Lord God. All such deeds and their results are offered to the Lord, and the sense of contentedness and fulfillment is of an ethereal dimension because now the objective is to serve the Supreme Being who is a provider of eternal peace, happiness and bliss instead of serving the gross body and its equally gross organs that are selfish and like a bowl of miseries and pain. A devotee of the Lord realises that the Supreme Being is a universal entity, that whatever is created in this world is one or the other form of the same divine Being, so he develops a sense of profound equanimity and equality in his approach to the world. He finds himself humbled by this realisation, and all his sense of pride and arrogance vanish. His approach and outlook in the world undergoes transformation, from being gross and selfish to being sublime and magnanimous.

The combined effect of all such spiritual endeavours is the upliftment of the soul of the aspirant.]

श्रवनादिक नव भक्ति दृढ़ाहीं । मम लीला रति अति मन माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

śravanādika nava bhakti dṛṛhāhīm. mama līlā rati ati mana māhīm. 8.

The cumulative auspicious effect of the aforesaid positive way of living a life dedicated to me (i.e. the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram) is that the aspirant develops keen interest in practicing the nine forms of Bhakti, such as hearing my divine stories, divine deeds, divine glories and divine name. [This half of the verse can be interpreted as follows also—“The next step, i.e. the third step, towards developing Bhakti and making it firm, steady and robust is to follow its nine steps, one of which is to hear about my divine stories, divine deeds, divine glories and divine name.”]¹

This will strengthen one's faith in me; he will have true affection for me. His 'Mana' (heart and mind) would develop a longing for my divine stories and divine deeds and their accompanying divine glories. [The second half of this verse can be interpreted as follows also—“The next step, i.e. the fourth step, towards having steady and firm Bhakti in me is to have great internal affection for me, as well as a sincere longing to hear about my divine stories and deeds. This desire must come from within, i.e. it must sprout in one's hear and mind.”]² (8)

[Note—¹There are said to be *nine steps to Bhakti*. It is called ‘Navadha Bhakti’. ‘Navdha’ = nine fold; ‘Bhakti’ = devotion, dedication, submission, faith and love for the Lord God, or anyone else who is spiritually exalted, wise, enlightened, holy, pious and divine, such as for example one’s moral preceptor and guide, great saints and sages etc.

Lord Ram has himself preached about them to Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36. We will read about them later on in this book when we come to these verses.

The aforesaid way of auspicious life is living in the company of saints and wise people, respecting elders who are wise and enlightened, living a life righteously according to the sanction of the scriptures, and developing a deep sense of renunciation from the deluding world and its material sense objects that trap the creature in a whirlpool of miseries, grief and torments. Obviously this is possible only in the community of saints where the singing of the Lord’s glories is a routine affair. In this community one does not hear talk of worldly things, but only about the Lord and his magnificent deeds, divine glories and holy name. The sense of profound internal peace and bliss that is obtained in hearing about the Lord and his divine glories is so immense and soothing that the aspirant forgets about the world and its false charms in which he had sought the same peace and bliss earlier. When he begins to taste the sublime nectar of real peace and happiness which comes by hearing about the Lord, about his divine glories and holy name, and when the aspirant takes a dip in the pristine water represented by them, he attains ecstasy and thrill like the one he had never ever experienced while remaining submerged or engrossed in the affairs of the gross world. The world and its stories only gave him more worries, but the stories of the Lord dispelled such worries; the sounds of the world fuelled his desires and fears, but those pertaining to the Lord filled him with ecstasy and exhilaration.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 128, sage Valmiki also reiterates this virtue of listening attentively the divine stories and glories of the Lord so much so that the listener is never satisfied or contented by hearing them. He wants to listen more and more of them. His ears are like the vast ocean that never gets filled by the countless rivers symbolizing the Lord’s divine glories and stories that continuously pour in it.

²One must not hear my stories to impress upon the world that he is a pious sort of person, or just to while away the time, or for purposes of entertainment, or to escape the drudgery of routine life and its affairs, or for anything else that smacks of pretensions, deceit and falsehood. The desire to hear about my divine and holy name, deeds, stories and glories must come sincerely from the heart, because it is only then that the mind and the sub-conscious will be focused on them. Otherwise there will be a lot of worldly distraction—i.e. though the person may sit through the narration of the story but his mind will be occupied elsewhere in the world. If this happens, then it is a sheer waste of time.

When one hears about the Lord and his divine stories from wise men who speak only the truth and explain the reality in understandable terms, when he sees for himself how happy, contented and blissful such men are, when he hears from them about the futility of pursuing the world and the great spiritual reward obtained by developing Bhakti for the Lord as a means of attaining eternal and robust peace and bliss on the one hand, and liberation and deliverance from the world of miseries and torments on the other hand, the hearer is motivated to hear more of it and test the teachings of these wise men for their practical implications. In a short while he realises the truth in what he hears, and comparing his experience with the world where he was constantly surrounded by horrifying worries and nagged by insurmountable problems with this world of profound bliss and happiness, he decides that it is Bhakti that will serve his interests best, it is Bhakti that will make his life fulfilled and contented and happy, it is Bhakti that can lead him to his objective of obtaining steady peace and eternal bliss in the easiest way, it is Bhakti that can provide him liberation and deliverance from the cycle of spiritual problems most conveniently.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 128, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue whereby the devotee remains immersed in the thoughts of Lord Ram. He has great love and longing to hear about the Lord and his glorious deeds, his divine stories and his divine form.]

संत चरन पंकज अति प्रेमा । मन क्रम बचन भजन दृढ़ नेमा ॥ ९ ॥

santa carana pañkaja ati prēmā. mana krama bacana bhajana dṛṛha nēmā. 9.

The next step (the fifth one) is to have affection and respect for the lotus-like holy feet of saints and pious people, and be devoted to them.¹

The next step of Bhakti (i.e. sixth) is to adore the Lord and have unflinching devotion for him by employing all his faculties—such as his Mana (mind and heart), his Karma (deeds) and his Bachan (words, speech). Besides these, he must be steady in his Niyam (spiritual practices such as repeating the Lord's holy name, listening to the Lord's divine glories, regular worship and meditation on the Lord, as well as in general way living a life as prescribed by the scriptures).² (9)

[Note—¹This is the fifth step for obtaining Bhakti. The 'lotus' flower is highly respected in the scriptures as a metaphor for the virtues of purity and cleanliness. This is because its petals are always clean inspite of the dirt and filth in the surrounding water of the pond where the lotus grows. A person who manages to remain aloof from the world and its delusions, corruptions and taints is compared to the lotus. The foot is that part of the body that is in constant touch with the ground, and it the part that becomes dirty first. The foot remaining clean inspite of it being in constant contact with dirt all around is a metaphoric way of saying that the concerned person is unaffected by the surrounding taints and impurities of the world. This is why this metaphor is used for the saints—because they live an ordinary life like the rest of the human race, but they manage to remain pure, holy and cleansed internally. None of the delusions and temptations of this material world ever affects their inner self. They remain engrossed in the thoughts of the Lord, submerged in the bliss and ecstasy that comes with realisation of the spiritual truth, and are perpetually in a state of meditation that enables them to live in a transcendental state of consciousness though externally they go about their routine life and affairs like ordinary people.

Another reason for comparing saints with a lotus is that just like the lotus flower that provides the nectar to the bee which comes to the flower seeking for it, these saints provide the nectar of spirituality and the ambrosia of eternal bliss and happiness represented by Lord Ram's divine stories, name, glories etc. to all those devotees who come to them in search for it. Just like a number of bees hum around a lotus that is ripe with nectar, these devotees flock to the saints in their quest of Lord Ram's Bhakti.

To be 'devoted' to saints is to faithfully serve them and follow their instructions. After all, if a student does not obediently obey the instructions of his teacher then he will never learn the subject properly. The teacher on his part is always inclined to favour that student who is loyal, obedient, faithful and diligent in his studies as compared to one who creates mischief, is disobedient and shows disrespect to him. Every good teacher wishes to give the best he knows to his student because the latter is the teacher's best ambassador in the world. If the disciple rises and does good work in the world, the credit goes to the teacher. So naturally the saints would be most willing to impart the divine knowledge that the seeker wants if the latter serves them faithfully and diligently. Otherwise they will treat him as a source of nuisance and avoid him by a long barge pole. Therefore, it is in the interest of the spiritual aspirant to be devoted to the saints from whom he expects to gain insight on esoteric matters.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of adoring and having devotion for the holy feet of saints. Valmiki says “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society).”

²The earnest devotee and the spiritual aspirant is prescribed this formula. (i) He must be focused on his spiritual practices, for anything done half-heartedly and with a distracted mind bears no fruit. (ii) He must do things in a righteous and proper manner, do them selflessly as a service to the Lord, and then offer all the results of such deeds to the Lord. This serves two major purposes—one, it makes him dispassionate towards the deeds and actions, and two, he does them calmly because he is not worried about their results which he is obliged to offer to the Lord. Further, since he is convinced that whatever he is doing is a service of the Lord God, all his actions and deeds automatically assume a holy nature and he does them with a pure mind and heart because it is an offering just like one offers something to a deity in a temple or any other shrine. (iii) He speaks the truth, never cheats anyone by speaking deceitfully or with vested interest in mind, is polite in his words, and is generally well spoken. His words and demeanours reflect his high mental caliber like a person of high birth and education. He gets acclaim and good friends; he fosters goodwill and brotherhood instead of hatred and ill-will. (iv) And he is diligent, steady and regular in whatever he does.

Even a cursory reading of these steps will show that they help a person to acquire the virtue of perfection, to become a noble human being. The Lord embodies all the good virtues and auspicious qualities in existence, and anyone aspiring to be near the Lord must acquire them, must develop them, must nurture them and practice them so that he does not look like an unwanted person in the company of holy people who surround the Lord. Not only this, these eclectic and divine virtues will make his life happy and joyous just like healthy life-style makes the physical body free from disease and so many other problems which in turn makes a person's life comfortable, peaceful, happy and enjoyable.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki reiterates this virtue of worshipping, adoring and having devotion for Lord Ram. Valmiki says—“Oh Lord! He who worships you with his own hands daily, who has no other reliance or support except you, who is convinced that taking refuge in or having devotion for your holy feet is equivalent to going to a pilgrim place, who repeats your holy name which is the king of all divine names, and who worships you along with all the members of his family—verily, you should live in the heart of such a person.”]

गुरु पितु मातु बंधु पति देवा । सब मोहि कहँ जानै दृढ़ सेवा ॥ १० ॥

guru pitu mātū bandhu pati dēvā. saba mōhi kaham̐ jānai dr̥ḥa sēvā. 10.

The next step (the seventh one) is to serve me faithfully, honestly, devotedly and diligently in the way of serving one's Guru (teacher, moral preceptor and guide), one's parents (father and mother), one's brothers (or peers, friends, companions, kith and kin), one's husband (applicable to a person's wife), and one's deity or the Lord to whom one is devoted—treating all of them as one of my forms, and therefore serving them with the conviction that it is me who is being served in their respective forms. (10)

[Note—This is in consonance with the grand philosophy of the Upanishads that teach that a truly wise, self-realised and enlightened man is he who sees the Lord in each living being. After all, the persons named in this verse have a direct bearing upon the life of a person, and they give him an

opportunity to serve the Lord God in practical terms with the view that all of them are images of the same Lord.

Why, if a person says that he is wise enough to imagine the existence of the Supreme Being in lifeless stone idols by virtue of which he worships statues and icons in shrines and treating them as images of the Lord God, should he not see the same Supreme Lord in the form of a living being so close to him, a living being with flesh and blood, as a direct representative of the Lord God? Well, if he does not see the Lord in them, then truly he has no moral right to say that he worships the Lord in dead and lifeless stones and idols.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 129, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram that he should live in the heart of a person who shows respects his Guru more than the Lord, and serves the Guru in the best possible way he can.

Again, sage Valmiki further stresses that “Oh Lord, you should live in the heart of such persons who are friendly towards all and think of the good of all”—refer; Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, the first part of Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 130.

In the same context, Valmiki says “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who bow reverentially and with special affection before gods, the Guru (teacher), and Brahmins (elders and learned people in the society)”—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129.]

मम गुन गावत पुलक सरीरा । गदगद गिरा नयन बह नीरा ॥ ११ ॥

mama guna gāvata pulaka sarīrā. gadagada girā nayana baha nīrā. 11.

The next step (i.e. the eighth) is to become so exhilarated and ecstatic while singing and narrating my divine glories and virtues that the body is thrilled and titillated, the voice is choked with surging emotions, and tears of love and ecstasy run down from the eyes. (11)

[Note—These are the physical signs of one being in a state of extreme happiness and ecstasy. The idea is that devotion and love for the Lord must be so deep seated and firmly established in one’s inner self, one should have such longing for the love of God that as soon as he starts singing the Lord’s divine story or his holy name, his body becomes overwhelmed with happiness and joy of the highest order so much so that tears flow involuntarily from his eyes, his voice becomes choked with surging emotions, and a thrill runs down his veins.

This state is also obtained during the higher stages of Yoga when an ascetic attains Samadhi, the transcendental state of existence of consciousness where the ascetic loses awareness of the body and the surrounding world, and lives in an ethereal plane that goes beyond the mundane and the ordinary.

Therefore, this state when the devotee sings the glories of the Lord and becomes thrilled with tears flowing down his eyes and voice choked is identical to the state of transcendental existence so much lauded and applauded in the spiritual field of Yoga.

Sage Valmiki has enumerated the many virtues which a person must possess if he expects that Lord Ram lives in his inner-being. These virtues are outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128, to Doha no. 131. During this presentation, the learned sage Valmiki says—“Lord Ram should live in the heart of such a person who loves the Lord more than his own life, for whom the Lord is the dearest one in this world (Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130)”. Naturally therefore, if one remembers someone who is extremely dear to him he is bound to be thrilled and excited.]

काम आदि मद दंभ न जाकें । तात निरंतर बस मैं ताकें ॥ १२ ॥

kāma ādi mada dambha na jākēm. tāta nirantara basa main̐ tākēm. 12.

Oh dear! I (the Supreme Being) have my permanent abode in the Mana (heart and mind) of those persons (devotees and spiritual aspirants) who have no trace of such vices as Kaam (passions, lust, yearnings etc.), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy), and Dambha (falsehood, deceit, conceit, pretensions, wickedness, crookedness etc.).

[That is, if a man's heart and mind are free from these vices, the Lord lives close to him, in his inner-self. In other words, such persons become one like the Lord himself; they represent the Lord himself; they are as honourable and worthy of reverence as the Lord.] (12)

[Note—This is the ninth form of Bhakti or sign of having devotion for the Lord—because once a person develops or inculcates or practices these virtues he is deemed to be free from all taints and internally cleansed so much so that the Lord now finds it fit to make his residence in the inner-self or the bosom of this devotee. Since the Lord can only live where there is purity of heart and mind, such a devotee is the proper place for the Lord to reside.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 130 in which sage Valmiki says that “Lord Ram should live in the heart of those persons who have no trace of vices such as Kaam (passions), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Maan (false sense of pride, ego and vanity), Moha (attractions for and infatuations with the world and its material sense objects, with the body and its organs), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (grief, sorrows, regrets, unhappiness and a sense of gloom and depression), Raag and Droha (attachments and attractions on the one hand, and animosity, ill-will and hatred on the other hand respectively), Kapat (deceit, conceit, falsehood, pretensions, wickedness, crookedness), and Maya (delusions and their attendant hallucinations and attachments with things that are false and imaginary).]

दो०. बचन कर्म मन मोरि गति भजनु करहिं निःकाम ।

तिन्ह के हृदय कमल महुँ करउँ सदा बिश्राम ॥ १६ ॥

dōhā.

bacana karma mana mōri gati bhajanu karahim̐ niḥkāma.

tinha kē hr̥daya kamala mahum̐ kara'um̐ sadā biśrāma. 16.

[This is the tenth form of Bhakti.] He who has me as his only destiny and succour, he who completely depends upon me in his words and speech, his deeds and actions, and his mind and heart, he who has deep devotion for me and who worships me selflessly—verily, I always find rest and peace while living comfortably in his lotus-like heart. (Doha no. 16)'

[Using the faculty of speech in service of Lord Ram means that one speaks the truth, speaks polite words, speak things that help others and shows them the correct way, talks only of rightful things and auspicious subjects, never talks ill of others or uses deceitful words to serve his selfish ends, uses his power to speak to honour the Lord and praise his glories, to propagate rightful knowledge and good virtues by way of teaching

and enlightening others about moral values and disseminating spiritual knowledge, and so on and so forth.

Using the deeds and actions as a means to serve Lord Ram means to do them selflessly, for the general welfare of the creatures, without any emotional attachment with them or their results, and offering both the deeds and actions and their results to the Lord.

Using the Mana (mind and heart) in the service of Lord Ram is to keep them cleansed of all negative thoughts and emotions, to keep them free from the corrupting effects of worldly taints such as countless attachments, delusions, desires, greed, passions etc. which act as moral impurities and spiritual drags that impede progress of the devotee towards his chosen goal, to keep the mind and heart focused on the Lord and his divine deeds, his holy name and his magnificent glories, and to serve and honour Lord Ram most sincerely and honestly, with full involvement of the mind, the sub-conscious and the heart. The mind, the sub-conscious and the heart which form the subtle component of the body must be entirely dedicated in the service of the Lord so much so that they are able to automatically guide the grosser components of the body, i.e. the various organs of perception and action, in being righteous, noble and conscientious in whatever they do. The control of the mind and heart is extremely important as they are the controlling authorities of all the deeds and actions which the physical body is involved in. An honourable mind and heart will make the body act and do whatever it does in an honourable manner.

Practicing these eclectic virtues makes a man cleansed of all worldly flaws and impurities, and he becomes holy and pious. Then it becomes possible for Lord Ram to live in his heart. When the Lord makes his presence felt inside the aspirant's inner-self, the latter experiences a high degree of bliss, peace and happiness that becomes permanent because once the Lord begins to live in his inner-being, there is no question of worldly delusions ever influencing him again. All his fears, miseries, sorrows etc. are dispelled for good, and he begins to enjoy beatitude and felicity.] (Doha no. 16)

[Note— In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram the type of devotees in whose heart the Lord should live. During this narration the sage says—(i) “he who has no other reliance or support, who completely depends upon Lord Ram (the Lord should live in his heart)—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129; (ii) “who believes that by taking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram he has gone to a pilgrim place, the Lord should live in his heart—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 129; (iii) “a person who expects only one reward for everything he does, and it is to have love and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram—verily, the Lord should live in his heart like it were the Lord's temple”—refer: Doha no. 129; (iv) “a person who has no destiny or succour except the Lord, Lord Ram should live in his heart”—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130; (v) “Oh Lord! He who loves you more than his own self, his own life, verily oh Lord, you should live in his heart as if it was your own auspicious residence”—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130; (vi) “for whom you (Lord Ram) is the only relation that matters, because you are his lord, friend, brother, father, mother and moral preceptor known as the Guru, verily you should live in his heart which is equivalent to your temple”—refer: Doha no. 130; (vii) “he who wants nothing ever, but has natural love, affection, faith and devotion for you, oh Lord you must always live in his heart because it is your own abode”—refer: Doha no. 131.]

चौ०. भगति जोग सुनि अति सुख पावा । लछिमन प्रभु चरनन्हि सिरु नावा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

bhagati jōga suni ati sukha pāvā. lachimana prabhu carananhi siru nāvā. 1.

Laxman felt very happy and fulfilled by hearing this discourse on Bhakti Yoga. He bowed his head most reverentially in the holy feet of the Lord (Ram). (1)”

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Canto 1.2

Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 31 in which the Lord has advised Jatau, the vulture.

जल भरि नयन कहहिं रघुराई । तात कर्म निज तें गति पाई ॥ ८ ॥

परहित बस जिन्ह के मन माहीं । तिन्ह कहूँ जग दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं ॥ ९ ॥

jala bhari nayana kahahim raghurāī. tāta karma nija tēm gati pāī. 8.

parahita basa jinha kē mana māhīm. tinha kahum̐ jaga durlabha kachu nāhīm.9.

When Lord Ram saw injured Jatau, the vulture, and observed his pitiful condition, the Lord was overwhelmed with grief and his eyes were filled with tears. He said to Jatau— ‘Oh my dear! You have come to this position which is in accordance with your own deeds¹. (8)

It is an established principle that those creatures who have the well-being and welfare of others in their heart, nothing is impossible for them in this world². (9)

[Note—¹You are suffering because you tried to help Sita by attempting to protect her from her tormentor, the demon king Ravana. You could as well have turned your eyes away and pretend to be deaf and dumb when you saw Ravana taking Sita away forcefully in his chariot, and she was wailing and lamenting pitifully. But no, you decided to intervene and help her. The result was that you are severely wounded. Well, those who try to help others in distress also suffer in the process themselves. But good souls never let this come in their way and they continue to help others. This is a righteous and noble deed which has its reward along with the suffering. What is that reward? Well, you now have the rarest of rare and the golden opportunity to have me, the Supreme Being, consoling and comforting you personally. You are resting on my laps, and I am personally tending your wounds. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30.

Remember dear: one day all living beings have to die, but what a noble death it is when one lays down one’s life for the welfare of others, to help others selflessly. I am indebted to you; I have never had tears in my eyes in my life, but you can see that my tears are uncontrollable now. You are so lucky that you have the Supreme Lord of creation standing right in front of you, empathizing with you and grieving for you, a privilege that is denied even to the wisest and the

most exalted of sages and seers who spend their entire lives in spiritual pursuit, doing severe penances and observing strictest of austerities.

‘Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance) is difficult for them, but it will be yours now. Physical sufferance is transient because the gross body is perishable and one day everything related to it would come to an end. More importance is that of suffering of the soul ensnared in the gross body. Cheer up now, for your salvation and deliverance is at hand; you have got the most sought after reward by the virtue of your noble deed which may have caused you temporary agony but which has paved the way for your eternal peace and happiness.

²You know why I am praising you? Well, it is an established principle of Dharma that ‘those who are selfless and have the interest of others in their mind and heart, there is nothing that is not possible or inaccessible for them.’ In other words, salvation and emancipation, liberation and deliverance, is yours now without doubt.

You have obtained two eclectic rewards: One is that I have come personally to visit you, and soon I will tend to your wounds myself. The second reward is that your soul will have the rarest of rare opportunity to find liberation and deliverance in my presence, though this fate would have been difficult for it because your body is that of a vulture which is regarded with contempt as it eats flesh of corpses. I had not done the last rites of even my own father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya, but I shall perform it for you. Indeed how lucky and privileged are you.

What to grieve for; what to feel sorry for; what to lament for! Verily I would say that no living being, no matter how high in the hierarchy of creation he has been born, has ever had this privilege—that the Supreme Being, the Lord of this creation, would perform his last rites with his own hands. You will be blessed with my Bhakti (devotion) which will lead you to salvation and emancipation that is guaranteed now. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (ii) Doha no. 32.

The message here is plain and simple—a person who has the interest of others in heart, who works selflessly for the good and welfare of other creatures, there is nothing that is difficult for them. The whole world becomes their friend. All people are ever eager to see that his needs are met, and he does not have to suffer in any way. Anything desired by him is fulfilled on a priority basis by those who have benefited from him, and since all have been his beneficiary in one way or the other, people regard as an honour to serve him as a gesture of their gratitude towards him.

Now let us have a brief background-story of this incident so that we can understand the Lord’s comments in the right perspective.

The Lord was searching for Sita, his divine consort, who was stolen by Ravana the demon king as part of the divine planning of the Supreme Being that would act as the precursor and an excuse for the elimination of the cruel demon race which had been tormenting the world no end, and creating immense horror for all the living beings that lived on earth. Jatau was a vulture—a bird who lives by feeding on corpses. So normally a vulture has no chance of going to heaven or finding liberation and deliverance of the kind that is attained by great sages and hermits. But this is exactly the destiny which Jatau managed to achieve. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.

Not only this, but he was so fortunate and privileged that Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, had performed his last rites with his own hands as if the vulture was the Lord’s father. Jatau went to the heavenly abode of Lord Hari, one of the many names of the Supreme Being. What a unique, holy and divine end this vulture got indeed! Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32.

Why this came to be is explained by the Lord here. Jatau had fought with Ravana to the best of his might in order to rescue Sita from the demon’s clutches, but the demon king had cut his wings. Jatau became helpless; he was mortally wounded in an attempt to selflessly help Sita. He fell to the ground, repeating the Lord’s holy name and waiting for one last chance to have a

divine glimpse of the Lord and tell him about the events before dying. He had no other wish. He fixed his attention in remembering the holy feet of the Lord and repeating the Lord's holy name. It was in this wretched condition that the Lord found him. Lord Ram lovingly lifted him up on his arms, wiped his wounds by unlocking his long lock of hairs as the Lord had no other means to clean his wounds, and moved his divine hands over the vulture's head caressingly. Jatau told everything to the Lord, and when Lord Ram offered him eternal life he refused, saying: "Where again will I get this golden chance to leave this mortal body—which I will nevertheless have to leave one day or the other—with the Lord standing right in front of me? I am not so foolish to let go of this chance. Oh Lord, I do not wish to live any longer. I want to die right now while looking at your beautiful form with my eager eyes." Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 31.]

तनु तजि तात जाहु मम धामा । देउँ काह तुम्ह पूरनकामा ॥ १० ॥

tanu taji tāta jāhu mama dhāmā. dē'um' kāha tumha pūranakāmā. 10.

'Oh dear! Discard your gross physical body (which is the cause of all your sufferings) and go to my divine abode in the heaven.' [In other words, Lord Ram advises Jatau to find liberation from the suffering that is being inflicted upon him by his wounded gross body, and find eternal peace and comfort by going to live in the abode of the Lord in the heaven.] (10)

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Canto 1.3

Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36 in which the Lord has preached Sabari, the low-caste woman devotee of the Lord.

After having met Jatau, the vulture whom Lord Ram gave eternal liberation and deliverance, the Lord moved ahead in the forest in search of Sita in the direction advised by Jatau. He came to the hermitage of Sabari, the low-caste woman who was the Lord's ardent devotee, spending her time remembering the Lord, chanting his holy name, and looking forward eagerly for that day when she would actually be able to meet the Lord and offer him worship. She used to collect plums and store them affectionately in the hope that one day Lord Ram would come visiting her, and then she will feed him with her own hands. Lord Ram who is ever so merciful and compassionate finally fulfilled her much cherished dream of life—as one fine day he walked into her hermitage. Sabari was overwhelmed; she did not know what to say or do, so stunned she was at this good fortune which she had never imagined will actually fructify.

She worshipped the Lord, washed his holy feet, offered him a seat and something to eat and get refreshed, and then prayed. She said that she was the humblest and the lowliest creature alive who has not known what is Bhakti, and therefore she does not understand how she was blessed by the Lord's august presence. It's really a miracle, she said, which she cannot believe is true.

It is then that Lord Ram preached her about the nine forms of Bhakti that endears its practitioner to the Lord. It is called ‘Navadha Bhakti’ or the nine-fold path of devotion, affection, love, surrender and dedication for the Supreme Lord that provides deliverance to a creature. The Lord told her that he believes in only one relationship, and that is of Bhakti.

Earlier, sage Valmiki had listed the auspicious characters and eclectic virtues of those people whose heart and mind are deemed to be a divine abode of Lord Ram, making them as holy as a formally consecrated shrine or temple of God. This narration appears in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128, to Doha no. 131.

Then again later on Lord Ram has preached Laxman about Bhakti and its subtle nine forms in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17. These have been explained at length in this book ‘Ram Geeta’ above.

It ought to be noted now in the context of the Lord’s preaching of the nine forms of Bhakti to Sabari that they all have one common factor or denominator running through them—and it is to have unadulterated, faithful and honest devotion, dedication, surrender and affection for the Lord God, to have exemplary auspicious and righteous virtues, to be free from all worldly attachments and delusions, and to have complete faith and reliance upon Lord Ram for all of one’s needs and spiritual welfare.

Since the various virtues and connotations of Bhakti have already been explained while describing Lord Ram’s discourse in favour of Laxman in part Section 1, part (1) of this ‘Ram Geeta’ above, we shall be brief here, and limit ourselves to the narration of the verses that describe what the Lord said to Sabari.

कह रघुपति सुनु भामिनि बाता । मानउँ एक भगति कर नाता ॥ ४ ॥

kaha raghupati sunu bhāmini bātā. māna'um' ēka bhagati kara nātā. 4.

Lord Raghupati (literally, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty of the kingdom of Ayodhya; i.e. Lord Ram) said to Sabari—‘Listen, good lady! I recognize and respect only one form of relationship—and it is known as ‘Bhakti’. (4)

[Note—The word ‘Bhakti’ covers such auspicious and glorious virtues as having true and sincere devotion, dedication, affection, love, surrender, submission, faith and belief in Lord God. Lord Ram is an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and therefore the nine forms of Bhakti which he enumerates here serve as a guide for any spiritual aspirant who wishes to attain the Supreme Being.

The term ‘Bhakti’ has been extensively explained in different contexts as notes appended to different verses of Lord Ram’s discourse for Laxman that is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17.

Then again, in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79 of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas, it is said that “the miseries and torments from which the creatures suffer cannot be eliminated without having devotion for Lord Hari”.

Bhakti is the only thing that pleases the Lord, and if a person has this virtue in him then it does not matter if he lacks everything else in this world as far as the Lord being pleased and benevolent upon him is concerned. No amount of pretensions and pampering will please the Lord

if the creature does not have the divine virtue of Bhakti in him. It is the only virtue, quality and character that endear a seeker of liberation and deliverance to the Supreme Lord. It is the only thing that the Lord seeks in a person in order to accept the latter in the fold of his close associates.]

जाति पाँति कुल धर्म बड़ाई । धन बल परिजन गुन चतुराई ॥ ५ ॥

भगति हीन नर सोहड़ कैसा । बिनु जल बारिद देखिअ जैसा ॥ ६ ॥

jāti pām̐ti kula dharma barā'ī. dhana bala parijana guna caturā'ī. 5.

bhagati hīna nara sōha'i kaisā. binu jala bārīda dēkhi'a jaisā. 6.

High caste, family lineage, diligence following of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, propriety and noble conduct), good reputation and all sorts of respect, honour and acclaim that one has in this world, possession or acquisition of material wealth and prosperity, physical strength, force, authority and powers, having a large family and circle of friends and followers, possessing countless skills, qualities and virtues, as well as possession of wisdom and intelligence—none of them matters at all and has any value for a man if he has no Bhakti in him, for if he lacks Bhakti then he appears like a cloud that has no rain in it. (5-6)

[Note—A cloud is of any worth only if it gives rain to the world, otherwise it is just a useless entity floating aimlessly in the sky. Rain-bearing clouds are welcomed by all the living beings, and though they are dark in colour, make threatening noises by rumbling and thundering, and often strike the world with the killing staff of lightening that instantly burns anything on earth where it lands, the people still honour the rain-bearing cloud, sing and dance in ecstasy when they first appear on the horizon after the scorching heat of summer, and celebrate their arrival. Even mother Nature smiles at the arrival of the rain-bearing clouds, with withered plants looking up in hope of survival, the dry and parched land preparing to look dressed up in verdant greenery like a newly decorated bride, the birds such as the peacock dancing to welcome the cloud with open plumes, and the Chatak bird (the cuckoo) feeling exhilarated and singing in merriment that at last it will be able to quench its thirst.

But dry rain-less cloud keep floating away in endless streams across the sky, and no body bothers about them.

Similarly, the world is full of countless living beings, having as many countless virtues, some small and others of a grand scale. They may all excel in their respective fields in the mundane world, to a lesser or a greater degree—and the Lord treats them all alike because all of them are his children.

But amongst these teeming millions and trillions of creatures there are those handful of them who have Bhakti for the Lord. Just as a father who treats his many sons who are all well established in life equally, but having a special soft corner for a son who is completely devoted to the father, loving him and diligently caring for his needs inspite of the fact that this particular son may not have done so well in terms of success in the world, Lord Ram too has a soft corner for a person who has the virtue of 'Bhakti' in him inspite of the fact that he may not been fortunate to take birth in a high family, have material prosperity, possess any skills and intelligence, or in any other way can be regarded as a successful man by worldly yardsticks. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 78 K says “a person who wishes to attain emancipation and salvation without having the virtue of Bhakti firmly engrained in him is as

anomalous as an animal which has no tail or horns on its body inspite of such a person being otherwise highly learned, erudite, wise and skilled”.]

नवधा भगति कहउँ तोहि पाहीं । सावधान सुनु धरु मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

navadhā bhagati kaha'um' tōhi pāhīm. sāvadhāna sunu dharu mana māhīm. 7.

Now I (Lord Ram) shall narrate to you the nine forms of Bhakti. Listen carefully and establish them firmly (cherish them) in your mind and heart. (7)

प्रथम भगति संतन्ह कर संगी । दूसरि रति मम कथा प्रसंगा ॥ ८ ॥

prathama bhagati santanha kara saṅgā. dūsari rati mama kathā prasaṅgā. 8.

The first form of Bhakti is having contact with saints, holy people and those who are pious, establishing a communion with them and obtaining their fellowship.

The second is to have a deep liking for and eagerness to hear divine stories and episodes related to my life and deeds. (8)

[Note—We have the same prescription that is also given by sage Valmiki, as well as by Lord Ram to Laxman, his younger brother.

The first component of Bhakti is ‘having communion with saints and holy people’. This component is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—first by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129; and then by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 16.

The second component of ‘having a deep sense of affection and liking for hearing Lord Ram’s divine stories’ is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—first by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 128 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-5; and then by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8, 11 that precede Doha no. 16.]

दो०. गुर पद पंकज सेवा तीसरि भगति अमान ।

चौथि भगति मम गुन गन करइ कपट तजि गान ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

gura pada paṅkaja sēvā tīsari bhagati amāna.

cauthi bhagati mama guna gana kara'i kapaṭa taji gāna. 35.

The third form of Bhakti is to humbly serve the holy lotus-like feet of one’s Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual teacher), and not having any sense of pride at having done so.

[That is, one must not go about boasting that the Guru favours him and has allowed the person to serve him. This service should be selfless and done with dedication. One must not serve the Guru just to extract knowledge from him, treating this service as a means to please the Guru so that he will reveal the secrets to the disciple, but done as a matter of showing gratitude and respect to a person who has not only shown the ignorant aspirant the correct path to his desired goal but also stand by him to prevent him from

falling in the countless pits that come in the way, guiding him along and coming to his aide when he needs help the most. Betrayal of trust of such a teacher, guide and help is the biggest inhuman act a person can ever imagine to perform, and a sin that would be unpardonable. But one must not be boastful of this service or do it with selfish aim only. It must be voluntary and not forced against one's wish. This service to the Guru must therefore be genuine, selfless, diligent, sincere and arising from the heart. One must not feel that he is obliging the Guru with his service, but rather feel honoured that he is lucky to have got an opportunity to serve him. A worthy disciple is one who feels privileged that the Guru was gracious enough to let him serve the latter, and that this is the minimum he can do to repay the debt that he owes to the Guru, because it is he, the Guru, who has removed the darkness of ignorance from his life and illuminated his path with the light of knowledge.]¹

The fourth form is to sing and emotionally submerge one's self in the narration and thoughts of my divine glories and virtues without any trace of pretensions, deceit, conceit, wickedness or crookedness. [For instance, one must not attend discourses and narration of the Lord's divine stories just to pass time or with the intention to tell the world that one is a religious and pious person so that the world begins to trust him. Then this pretentious and deceitful person exploits this trust to serve his vested interests and fulfill his worldly passions and desires. This sort of hearing of the Lord's story serves no good at all; rather it pulls the man down in the bog of deceit and falsehood which he is supposed to rise from in the first place when he went to attend the discourse about the Lord.] (Doha no. 35)

[Note—The third component of 'humbly serving the Guru' is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—by sage Valmiki in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precedes Doha no. 129; and earlier by Tulsidas himself in Baal Kand, from stanza no. 5 of the first 'Sortha' (a sort of verse) with which the book Ram Charit Manas opens, and then from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1, till Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

The fourth component of Bhakti is 'to sing and narrate Lord Ram's divine stories and glories without any pretensions, cunning and deceit'. This component is also reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—by Lord Ram himself in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 16 while the Lord was preaching Laxman about Bhakti.

¹Now let us read more about a *Guru*, what are his qualities that are so much eulogized in the scriptures, and why he is given so much importance. Even Tulsidas has praised a Guru in laudatory terms as mentioned above.

The importance of a Guru has been emphasized in a number of Upanishads, viz.—

(a) Shukla Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18; Shatyayani Upanishad, verse no. 39; Niralamba Upanishad, verse no. 30.

(b) Krishna Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 35; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 44; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 56-59, and Canto 6, verse no. 79; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 39; Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad, in its verse no. 21; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 52-53; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 3-4; and Canto 2, verse nos. 12-13; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 76; Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3 (Lord Rudra is the universal Guru).

(c) Atharva Veda's following Upanishad—Manduka Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse nos. 12-13; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 10-11, and Canto 8, paragraph no. 17, 1st stanza; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 1.

(d) A minor Upanishad named the 'Dwayo-panishad' is entirely dedicated to enumerating the chief characteristics of a Guru. It is not known to which Veda it precisely belongs.

(e) The *Anand Ramayan* (said to be written by sage Valmiki) narrates the virtues of the Guru in its Manohar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 3, verse nos. 7-17.

Who is a true Guru? This is a question which has baffled many a scholars. The word 'Guru' simply means a person who is one's teacher—be it in the field of knowledge that pertains to the world or the field that relates to the spiritual. He is the person who makes a person acquire knowledge that he did not have earlier.

The Upanishads explain the term Guru in detail and list the virtues that a wise and enlightened Guru is supposed to possess. They also outline the characteristics that a good disciple must have, and how best one can choose a good Guru.

The word *Guru* has two parts—viz. 'Gu' meaning darkness, and 'Ru' meaning light. Hence the word 'Guru' means a person who can remove the darkness symbolising ignorance and illusions that has engulfed the disciple from all sides and act as a hindrance or an obstacle in his emancipation and salvation by showing him the truthful path, or lighting his path with the light of knowledge and holding out his hands to support him when he falters. Therefore he is an exalted, revered and much sought after person who can remove the darkness of ignorance of his follower by showing him the light of knowledge and guides him whenever he finds himself in a moral dilemma and quandary. He is the person who is both the moral preceptor as well as the spiritual guide of his disciple. He is supposed to act as a neutral advisor to his ward in all matters temporal and spiritual. The disciple is expected to confide in him his greatest of secrets without the fear of betrayal or blackmail. He is the one who is expected to have risen above all kinds of vested interests and keeps the welfare of the disciple as his main objective. He is the one who has transcended the mundane and has acquired sublime awareness of the supreme Reality, because only those who are themselves aware of anything can hope to tell others about it. Therefore it is deemed that only a person of high mental, intellectual, spiritual and ethical caliber can become a true Guru.

A true Guru is treated as being equivalent to the 'Trinity Gods'—(1) Brahma, the creator, because he creates or helps to take birth good virtues and noble qualities in his disciple; (2) Vishnu, the sustainer, because he nourishes, sustains and helps to inculcate and develop wisdom and enlightenment in his disciple and leads him on the truthful path; and (3) Shiva, the concluder, because he helps to end, conclude and eliminate ignorance and negative traits in his disciple. He is 'God like' because he functions in all these capacities at the same time, besides being exalted in all knowledge, being virtuous, of high moral character and beyond reproach, being a source of unbound spiritual energy, being self realised and enlightened, and being eternal in the sense that what he advises to his disciple, the path he shows, the light that he lights in the dark heart of the creature, makes him immortal. The Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3 explicitly asserts that Lord Shiva is the universal Guru of all, and that the Guru is Shiva personified in this form.

Therefore, a Guru is honoured for the divine virtues that he represents and embodies, that he teaches and implements in his life, for the divinity, for the Lord and for the personification of the great teachings of the scriptures that he exemplifies.

When the teacher (Guru) is especially pleased with a particular student, he would naturally be inclined to pay more attention to him as compared to others. This is natural for him because he sees in this student a spark of great future, a soul who would sincerely and honestly carry forward the teacher's legacy forward and make his teachings as well as his name and fame immortal. As for other less brilliant and devoted students, or those who are just mediocre and run-of-the-mill sort, the teacher has no such grand expectations from them. So he prefers to impart the best of education to his special and most-favoured student. The teacher would even unravel top secrets to him because he is confident that this disciple would never misuse them and also understand these secrets correctly and properly. This relationship is just like a father of more than

one son. The father would have a natural love for the son in whom he sees a bright future and from whom he expects the family's good name and fortune to get a boost as compared to those sons who are like blights on the family.

The Guru is regarded as a personification of the great knowledge of the scriptures (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 10), as well as Lord Maha Vishnu himself (refer Tripadvibut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 8, paragraph no. 17, 1st stanza). It is not his physical body that is of any value for veneration, for the eternal 'soul' and not the physical gross body is venerable.

The Bhavana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its opening verse no. 1 emphasizes the importance of true Guru and says that he is the primary source of Shakti (strength, energy, vitality, vigour and authority) for the spiritual aspirant and his primary advisor and moral support. The aspirant relies on the authority of the Guru and his knowledge to faithfully move ahead in a field which is still unknown to him and un-chartered by him, without the fear of going on the wrong path or falling prey to uncertainties.

The wise, learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, guide and teacher) is a true advisor and guide for a spiritual aspirant. He is the one who acts as the primary source of strength and support that empowers the person to move ahead on his spiritual path and ultimately attain success in his endeavours. He is the virtual 'Shakti' or source of energy, motivation, strength, power and authority that provides the necessary support, impetus and dynamism to all the efforts made by the aspirant to reach his goal in life successfully. But for this to materialize, the Guru himself should be an expert in his field, and inclined to helpful and supporting; he should be a teacher, a preceptor, a motivator, an advisor, a friend and a guide all rolled into one.

This verse is a sort of salutation to the teacher, and showing of honour and respect to him. He is the one who deftly guides the student of spiritualism, or for that matter in any field of learning, on the correct path, warning him of the numerous pitfalls, and how to overcome them successfully. In this context, this verse can be read as follows also—A man who is wise, learned and enlightened is the one who is eligible to become a true teacher who guides and advises a spiritual aspirant. Such a teacher is the disciple's or a student's real friend and support; he provides his ward (the disciple or the student) the much-needed moral support, guidance, motivation and inspiration to move ahead even when the former appears to have lost hope and the drive to move ahead. It is the teacher or the Guru who removes all darkness symbolized by ignorance and delusions, and instead lights up the path to success for his ward. The Guru picks up the ward whenever he stumbles and falls, or is down in the docks; the Guru instills confidence and hope in him when he is dejected and hopeless. The Guru provides the necessary impetus to the disciple to move ahead and rise up against all odds and misfortunes. This is why the Guru is called the primary form of Shakti for the spiritual aspirant. Even as any endeavour needs 'Shakti' (dynamism, energy, vitality, strength, impetus, drive) to succeed, the Guru is the one who provides this much-needed Shakti to the spiritual aspirant.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Mundak 1, section 2, verse nos. 12-13 describes the importance of the Guru as follows—

“Verse no. 12 = Wise men (who have understood this reality and are eager for finding the truthful way that would give permanent spiritual rewards) approach some learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, teacher and guide) who is not only well-versed in the 'truth' of Brahm as enshrined in the Vedas but is also a firm believer in this 'truth' known as Brahm and is a practitioner of this 'truth'. It is only he who can show the spiritual aspirant the correct path leading to Brahm and teach him about the supreme knowledge of Brahm (12).

“Verse no. 13 = This enlightened and Brahm-realised Guru is obliged to welcome the aspirant, who is calm in his demeanours and has obtained full control over his sense organs, as his disciple. The teacher should teach him the divine and eclectic knowledge of Brahm, a knowledge called

‘Brahm Vidya’, so that the eager disciple can have a comprehensive knowledge of the truthful and eternal Brahm (13).

The Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 14-18 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition elaborately describes the virtues that a true Guru should possess. These verses are being quoted here for ready reference—

“Verse no.14-15—A Guru should be well versed in the tenets of the Vedas or the knowledge contained in them, must possess the best of virtues and characters and be exemplary in his behaviours and temperament, should be an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and Lord of the world), should be free from the tainting effects of such negative traits as Matsar (i.e. jealousy, envy, anger, wrathfulness) etc.¹, should be an expert in the art, craft and science of Yoga (meditation techniques and contemplative practices) and devoted towards them (i.e. must practice them himself, and be sincere and honest about his firm conviction about their efficacy), should be so involved in the philosophy of Yoga that it forms his way of life and soul (i.e. the philosophy of Yoga should be reflected in his personal life and his preaching should hold conviction), should be immaculate, pure and uncorrupt, should be devoted towards his own Guru, and should be diligent and committed towards attaining the supreme Lord at all costs.

According to the Varaha Upanishad, canto 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, there are six enemies which are metaphors for the various faults that are associated with a creature. They are the following—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will)

“Verse no. 16—The word Guru has two letters—viz. ‘Gu’ and ‘Ru’. The word Gu means darkness, while the word Ru refers to that which can remove or dispel that darkness. Hence, he who is able to remove or dispel the darkness of ignorance and delusions, who prevents these elements from spreading their tentacles of darkness, and in case the darkness already exists then he is able to remove it with his auspicious advice and guidance, and who is able to liberate his disciple from the clutches of this all engulfing darkness that threatens to drown him is called a Guru.

“Verse no. 17—A Guru is akin to the supreme Brahm personified; a Guru is the supreme abode or shelter that provides succour and solace to the tormented soul of the disciple and the last port of call for him, a Guru is like a treasury of transcendental and eclectic knowledge of divinity, and a Guru is the best person who should be consulted and followed by a disciple who sees him as a role model to be emulated.

“Verse no. 18—A Guru represents the best of values and the highest stature a person can ever hope to attain, and a Guru is the best asset that a person possesses (because he gives him good advice and props up his sagging morale during his bad days, he can be faithfully relied upon with no fear of betrayal, he shows him the auspicious, noble and righteous path when he is in a dilemma, he acts as a beacon of hope for his disciple when the rest of the world has betrayed him, and he never has any vested interest in anything other than what is good and fortunate for his disciple and which would ensure his all round welfare and happiness). A person who gives the best advice according to given circumstances and time is said to be the best of all Gurus as far as the disciple is concerned.

We should note here that the Upanishads have a very broad and open minded approach to any subject; they are not dogmatic and rigid in their doctrines. A person may be expert in any one field but not in another, and this does not mean that the disciple should not benefit from this man for the knowledge that he possesses. Therefore, for a particular problem a disciple may have one

Guru, but for another problem that confronts him he might as well have another. It is not binding upon him that once he has accepted a particular person as his Guru he cannot accept another person as his second Guru. The main function of the institution of a Guru is to help a disciple in all his endeavours, but in an auspicious and righteous manner. Even one's own father and mother and wife and son and friend, and for that matter even one's enemy can be a Guru if they can enlighten the person in a particular field.

There is a minor Upanishad called Dwayo-panishad which describes the chief characteristics of a true Guru. It has only seven Mantras. This Upanishad is being cited here verse by verse to clearly highlight the main features of a Guru:---

(a) Verse nos.1-2= A person is called a Guru if he is endowed with enlightenment and wisdom making him well versed and skilled in the Vedas, both in their literal knowledge as well as in the profound wisdom and the ethereal and eclectic metaphysical and spiritual philosophy they contain, who is an ardent devotee and sincere follower of Lord Vishnu, who is free from such negative traits as jealousy, envy and malice, who is well versed and skilled in the various holy and divine Mantras, their usage, their ethereal importance and spiritual significance as well as all other matters related with them, who is sincerity devoted to those Mantras and has firm belief, conviction and faith in them, who seeks the shelter and refuge of those Mantras, who is pure and immaculate, uncorrupt and unpolluted in any form, who is devoted and dedicated to his own Guru, and who is well versed and skilled not only in all the Purans but all other scriptures as well.

(b) Verse no.3= A person is called a Guru who has a comprehensive and holistic knowledge and understanding of all the scriptures, and who not only preaches righteousness, probity and propriety as well as nobility of thoughts and actions but also lives them and implements them in their letter and spirit in his personal life.

(c) Verse no. 4= The letter 'Gu' means darkness, while the letter 'Ru' means that which remove that darkness. Hence, Guru is one who removes the darkness representing ignorance and delusions that are so typically associated with this deluding world.

(d) Verse no.5= A true Guru is equivalent to the supreme and transcendental Brahman; he is the ultimate destination for a seeker; he is a fount of the supreme knowledge and the source of the best of such knowledge; he is deemed to be the best and the greatest asset for a man.

(e) Verse no.6= A Guru is the best thing a wise seeker seeks and searches for, he is the best and the supreme place for seeking refuge and shelter with, and he being a dispenser of the profoundest of wisdom and knowledge is deemed to be a person who is the most important, who has the highest standards of greatness and magnificence, who is most dignified and meritorious, who is most weighty and significant, and who is most distinct and outstanding in all aspects.

(f) Verse no.7= Pronouncing the word 'Guru' even once enables the aspirant to access liberation and deliverance from this entrapping and deluding world. All his efforts are deemed to have been successful by simply saying this powerful word sincerely. Such a man does never come back (enters the cycle of birth and death) in this world again—verily, this is the truth. Those who understand this fact correctly get the desired fruit'.

The Shatyayani Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 39 describes the virtues of a true Guru. This verse describes the importance and glory of a moral preceptor, spiritual guide, an all-rounder advisor and a practical teacher, called a Guru. It is deemed here that he is wise, erudite, sagacious, learned and enlightened, simply because only a person who knows something himself can teach it to others; the rest are only imposters. It says—"Guru is the supreme Dharma. That is, one should faithfully serve and follow the advice and instructions of one's Guru just like one must sincerely, diligently and ardently follow one's religiously sanctioned norms of behaviour and righteous codes of conduct, duties and responsibilities, which are collectively called a person's Dharma as established by the scriptures. It also refers to a noble

conduct that is conducive to happiness and liberation from the shackles that tie a creature to the deluding and entrapping world.

Likewise, the Guru is the last shelter and refuge for a person (because it is he who guides a person when he is confused, doubtful and perplexed; when he needs support and succour; when he needs a true friend by his side). It is he who guides a person on the correct path and removes all consternations from his mind; it is in him that a disciple can confide without any fear of betrayal, back-stabbing, blackmailing and revenge. It is he who sincerely and selflessly advises a person on all matters as it is in him a person blindly reposts all faith and confidence. In fact, a Guru is the best council.

A person who does not show due respect and honour to the Guru who has selflessly given him the bounty of truthful knowledge, who teaches him and makes him wiser, more knowledgeable, skilled and educated, then all the Gyan (i.e. all the knowledge, all skills, all wisdom, all erudition and all learning that the person has acquired or gained) as well as all the good effects of the Tapa (i.e. penances, austerities, sufferings and hardships that he has endured in his quest for an all round welfare and enhancement) gradually fade away or decline and lose their potentials, powers, prowess and effects, rendering that unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal disciple shorn of all glories, fame and moral strengths that should have otherwise accrued to him just like the case where water slowly seeps out of an earthen pot made from half-baked mud. [In other words, if a man does not show due respect to his teacher, he will be cursed and all the good virtues that would have normally given him good name and fame would abandon him. He would be deemed to be unfaithful, ungrateful and disloyal, and would be just like a traitor who has betrayed his country. No good virtues would stay with him.] [39].”

The Shuk-Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 21 describes the glory of a true Guru in these words—“ One should mentally remember one’s Guru, show due respect and pay homage to him most reverentially in the following words—‘He (i.e. the wise, erudite, sagacious, most learned, enlightened, and self-realised moral preceptor, spiritual guide and teacher) always sports a cheerful and pleasant disposition.

He is an embodiment of the best of blessings and virtues that bestow all round welfare and happiness to his followers (disciples), and whose mere presence is very comforting and reassuring for them.

He is a living personification of Gyan (which is pure and truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment).

He is beyond the reach of perplexities and vexations created by the sense of duality in this world, leading to contradictory thoughts, emotions and sentiments that create unnecessary doubts, dichotomy and confusions. That is, he is mentally stable and steadfast in his convictions and beliefs; he is not swayed by the buffeting effects of adversities, turmoil and suspense that are so characteristic of this delusory world.

He has the subtle and sublime characteristics that are so unique to the sky. That is, he remains aloof and detached from everything like the sky; he is not tainted or affected by anything or any circumstance in this world much like the sky in which uncountable varieties of things are embedded in Nature but which remains inherently untainted and uncorrupted by any of them. This is inspite of him (the Guru) being surrounded by all the material objects, impurities and delusions that are so characteristic of this world. The Guru is constantly being buffeted by so many numerous and divergent impulses originating from this material world which is like a trap in which even the most learned persons fall, but inspite of these distractions and constant gnawing he remains flawless and faultless like the sky. He is a repository of knowledge and has a depth of enlightenment that is as vast, endless and fathomless as the sky; he remains calm and serene like the distant recesses of the vast and endless sky. In short, a true Guru is comparable to the grand virtues as possessed by the sky element.

He keeps his attention fixed on one essential 'truth', the element which is supreme, transcendental, non-dual and most truthful, instead of allowing his mind and intellect to wander here and there in myriad theories, doctrines and philosophies, leading to immense confusions, uncertainties and consternations as well as distress and vexations for the spirit much like a ship that is being tossed around in a choppy ocean.

He is 'one and perpetual'. That is, he is steady and stable as a rock in his beliefs, convictions, words, emotions, sentiments and thoughts; he is not of a fickle mind and character; he is not swayed by and swept off his moorings by myriad distractions and divergent influences which are characteristic attributes of this material world of delusions; he is unchanging and unwavering; he believes in one non-dual supreme Truth which is eternal and infinite.

He is most pure, uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemish of any kind.

He remains unruffled and unmoved, maintaining his equanimity and calmness even under adversities and unfavourable circumstances, such as during periods of extreme emotional turmoil and stress because he is full of the eclectic virtues of being dispassionate, calm, neutral and detached from everything. Instead, he remains ever submerged in a perpetual state of equanimity and bliss.

He is like an all-knowing, wise, expert and sagacious, but a neutral and detached witness to what the mortal world and its inhabitants do, being a dispassionate and un-involved observer to the happenings around him in this world.

He is full of equanimity, fortitude and evenness of mind and heart, remaining untouched and unaffected by the rocking effects of various emotions and sentiments that continuously pummel his heart, mind and intellect, and perpetually disturb him by intruding into his stoic calmness and peaceful demeanors.

He is free from being tainted or affected by the apparent good or bad effects of the three legendary Gunas or qualities inherent in all the living creatures, and which create distortions in the basically clean fiber symbolising the inherently pure and immaculate character of any individual's true self (i.e. his Atma; his consciousness). [These three Gunas are Sata or the noble quality which creates propensity for righteousness and noble behaviour, Raja is the second quality which creates worldly desires and aspirations, leading to the predominance of such characters that make a creature worldly wise, and Tama which is the meanest and lowest quality, creating the tendency for sinful conduct. All these three qualities are present in a person, but his individuality is decided by the ratio in which these three are present. The 'inherent purity' refers to the immaculacy of the Atma which is the 'true self' of all living beings. These Gunas cast their shadow on the shine of the self-illuminated and immaculate Atma, making the individual appear to exhibit certain artificial taints and characteristics that are extraneous to his true self. This is like the case of the shadow of the moon falling upon the earth when it comes between the sun and the earth, giving rise to the solar eclipse. The sun has not lost its shine and neither is there a night during the day, but the optical impression created by this intervention of the moon makes it appear to be so. Similarly, the immaculate Atma appears to be tainted and darkened when these Gunas cast their shadow upon it. The resultant effect is that the individual does not appear to be as holy and divine as he actually is. In the case of a wise Guru, it is deemed that he has gained sufficient control over his self that none of these three Gunas are able to display their characteristic behaviour, thereby making the Guru absolutely neutral and pristine pure like a piece of crystal.]

I bow most reverentially and devotedly to such a Guru who possesses these virtues as narrated in this verse. [It is to be noted here that the eclectic and sublime virtues enumerated here are the virtues of the Supreme Being or Brahm. In other words, that Guru who is possessed of these attributes is no less revered than Brahm; he is equivalent to Brahm; he is Divinity personified.] (21)."

Let us see briefly how Tulsidas praises the Guru in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, stanza no. 5 of first Sortha with which this epic opens, followed by verses from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1, to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

“I pay my obeisance at the holy lotus-like feet of a Guru who is like an ocean of mercy and grace, who is like a personified form of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Lord), and whose words of wisdom are equivalent to the brilliant rays of the sun so far as removing the darkness of ignorance is concerned. (Stanza no. 5 of the first Sortha of Baal Kand)

I pay my obeisance to the nectar (‘Paraag’) that is symbolically present in this lotus like holy feet of a Guru. This nectar is extremely delicious, fragrant and succulent. [That is, it provides happiness and bliss to the worshipper in the same way as the nectar does to the bee.] (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The auspicious dust of the feet of the Guru is like an herbal powder made from the Sanjivani herb (that injects life into a lifeless creature). [That is, by worshipping the holy feet of the Guru the worshipper receives his blessings, and this in turn rejuvenates his inner-self by cleansing it of all taints and delusions associated with the world, as well as illuminating it with the light of knowledge.] (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This auspicious dust is equivalent to the holy ash smeared on the divine body of Lord Shiva. It is a producer and bestower of all welfare and happiness (upon the worshipper). (Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This dust removes the (spiritual) dirt clinging to the mirror represented by the devotee’s heart and mind. [That is, just like the case when one can see an object clearly when the mirror is scrubbed clean, the worshipper is able to remove all delusions from his mind and free his heart of all worldly attachments so much so that now he can experience the bliss of self-realisation that comes with experiencing the presence of the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Conscious Being, in his own bosom. Once all veils of ignorance are removed, once the thick layers after layers of numerous faults and impurities are scrubbed off, the spiritual aspirant is able to witness the inherent blissful and peaceful nature of the ‘truthful self’ known as the Atma. This is the aim of all spiritual practices—to realise the Truth and Reality by overcoming all delusions and ignorance.] (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The nails of the feet of the Guru have the sublime shine resembling that of gems so much so that their light illuminates the subtle heart of the worshipper as soon as he remembers them. [This is symbolism only. It simply means that when one worships the Guru’s holy feet his mind and heart should be focused on its subtle and ethereal aspect, its sublime and spiritual value, and not on its grosser physical appearance such as the colour of the skin of the feet, whether they are wrinkled and chafed due to old age and hardships of life, if the nails are healthy or rough and brittle, etc. Just as a pearl for instance has a subtle silken glow and smoothness that is inherent to it in spite of the fact that its origin is in an oyster and the ocean, the nails of the feet of the Guru also enables the worshipper to illuminate his inner self with the light of ‘consciousness’ that comes from within. The ‘supreme consciousness’ lives in the subtle space of the heart of the spiritual aspirant in the form of an ethereal entity known as the ‘Atma’. This Atma is self-illuminated, and its realisation makes the inner-self of the worshipper glow with the light of self-realisation like the inherent shine of a priceless piece of gem.] (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1)

This light of knowledge and self-realisation that springs forth spontaneously in the subtle heart of the spiritual aspirant is able to dispel and eliminate completely all traces of darkness of ignorance and delusions that had earlier shrouded his inner-self. He is very lucky and fortunate in whose heart this light burns. (Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1)

As soon as this light illuminates one’s heart, the subtle eyes of wisdom and enlightenment open spontaneously. This in turn removes all the fears and horrors arising from the darkness of night symbolized by this world and its delusions. [A man sees many imaginary ghosts and phantoms in the darkness of the night, but as soon as daylight dawns, they vanish, and all

fears and terrors arising from these phantoms go away automatically. Similarly, as soon as wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment sprouts in the inner-self of the spiritual aspirant, all his fears having their genesis in the darkness of ignorance run away.] (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 1)

The grand spiritual benefit of this self-illuminating light of wisdom and enlightenment that begins to shine in one's inner-being upon self-realisation, accompanied by the ability to see things that have a subtle, sublime and ethereal existence (as opposed to those that have gross and mundane existence in this physical gross material world), enables the seeker to see and understand the esoteric secrets of the divine story of Lord Ram, and be privileged enough to be able to peer behind the exterior to have a divine glimpse the glittering gems, large and small, of profound spiritual value that lie embedded in this holy story but are normally hidden from view. (Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1).

It is like the case of some especially empowered and sanctified magical ointment that experts who possess occult powers (such as the Siddhas) apply on their eyes to be able to see hidden treasures, such as mines of gems and precious stones etc., inside mountains, forests and earth. (Doha no. 1)

The holy dust of the Guru's august feet is like this especially empowered magical ointment that is soothing and soft for the eyes, and it removes all diseases of the eyes. [This line must be properly interpreted. The eye referred to here in this verse is the subtle inner-eye of the mind and intellect, and not the physical eye of the gross body. It is not the physical organ of the gross body that is known as the eye with which one sees the grosser aspects of the equally gross world of material sense objects, and therefore it also does not refer to some physical disease of the eye.

The 'disease' here is the spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance that prevents the creature to see the Truth and Reality. Worshipping the holy feet of the Guru and focusing the mind on the dust of his holy feet acts like a medicine for this subtle disease. It enables a person to develop wisdom and ability to see what is wrong, unethical and unrighteous, and segregate it from what is wise, righteous, ethical and correct. It opens the eyes of wisdom, erudition and discrimination that allow the man to see and examine the surrounding world intelligently and analytically. It is like removing cataract from one's eyes when suddenly he begins to see the whole world clearly, brightly. The auspicious reward of worshipping the holy feet of the Guru is that this empowers the spiritual aspirant to have the ability to have deep insight into the reality of the world and its existence with eyes of wisdom that can see behind the shroud of delusions that surround the entire world like a thick veil of smoke, preventing clarity of sight.] (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2)

Using this dust like an eye-ointment, I (Tulsidas) clean my eyes of wisdom and erudition so that I may be able to narrate the esoteric, sublime, holy and divine story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit Manas. (2) (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2). ”]

चौ०. मंत्र जाप मम दृढ़ बिस्वासा । पंचम भजन सो बेद प्रकासा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

mantra jāpa mama dṛṛha bisvāsā. pañcama bhajana sō bēda prakāsā. 1.

Doing Japa with my (holy) name (i.e. repeating the holy name of Lord Ram as a spiritual formula), and having firm faith and belief in me—verily, this is the fifth form of Bhakti and is highlighted even in the Vedas (the primary scriptures).

[The fifth form of devotion is to constantly and persistently repeat and remain engrossed and submerged in my holy and divine name, and have unflinching and steady faith and conviction in its glory and divinity as revealed in the Vedas.]

{The first half of this line can be interpreted as follows also—“Doing Japa with my name (‘Ram’), and having a firm faith in it—i.e. in the power of the holy name as well as the efficacy of the process of repeating it as done during Japa) as a means of attaining bliss and eternity as well as liberation and deliverance-----”} (1)

[Note—The fifth mean of doing Bhakti is ‘constant repetition of Lord Ram’s holy name ‘RAM’’. This is also reiterated earlier in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 129 by sage Valmiki when he lists the various virtues that one must possess in order to enable Lord Ram to make his august presence in the devotee’s inner-self. The same idea is repeated by Lord Ram when he preaches Laxman about Bhakti in Aranya Kand, Doha no. 16 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 9.

Sage Valmiki has honoured Lord Ram’s holy name as a ‘Mantra-raaj’ or the king of all Mantras. A Mantra is a divine esoteric formula consisting of letters, syllables, words, phrases or even full hymns that are said to possess special spiritual magical powers that help the aspirant achieve some great goal that is otherwise not possible by other means. The Mantra acts as a catalyst and a dynamic force propelling the aspirant towards his desired goal. Each deity has its own Mantra which is like a cosmic key that enables the worshipper to tap that deity’s powers.

The Mantra of Lord Ram has many variations—the most potent one is its basic form known as the Beej Mantra or the seed from which the rest of the Mantras derive their empowerment. It consists of the Sanskrit syllable that when pronounced is heard as the word ‘Raam’. In the purest form of this Mantra, the letter ‘m’ is silent, and there is a dot on the top which renders the pronunciation something like ‘ng’ as in the word *rung* or *wrung* in English. Therefore, the actual pronunciation is ‘Raa(ng)’.

Incidentally, this Beej Mantra of Lord Ram is also the Mantra of the Fire God. This has great metaphoric value and importance. The ‘fire’ represents the most powerful and dynamic force in creation. It is never corrupted. It burns all impurities and leaves alone the pure metal—a virtue used for purifying gold. It glows with its own light, illuminating the area around it and chasing away darkness. It provides heat and energy so much essential for life in this world. Under its influence the air becomes active—as is witnessed when wind begins to blow and howl near a raging fire. It is the warmth of the fire that helps earth foster life, to help crops grow, to help cook food and to digest this food in the body to provide nourishment to the creature.

The symbolism and parallel is obvious. The holy name of Lord Ram is the dynamic force that subtly and imperceptibly sustains life in this creation; it is at the core of the ‘consciousness’ that keeps the world alive. The repetition of this holy name fans the wind of enlightenment that drives the impurities away; it burns all the impurities.

This holy name of the Lord, i.e. the Mantra ‘Raam’ is known as the ‘Tarak Mantra’ as it takes a creature across the vast ocean represented by this world, its myriad horrors and miseries, and its whirlpool of birth and death which keeps the creature trapped in its vortex.

The general meaning and understanding of the word *Japa* is ‘constant repetition of any holy name of the God or any divine word or Mantra’. This verse tells us that if that is not possible for a man, or if he is not interested in it, then the next best option for him is to read good books. This will have similar good effects on his mind as doing ‘Japa’. Because if the mind is not kept busy, it will gravitate towards corrupt and pervert thinking; it cannot sit idle. If it is not possible to leash it by means of chanting or repetition of ‘Mantras’, then at least it should be reined in by reading good books instead of allowing it to wander aimlessly here and there like a vagrant indulging in useless roaming about. Remember, an idle mind is the workshop of devil. See also Trishikhi Brahmano-panishad, verse nos. 2/28-34 of Shukla Yajur Veda in this context.

The Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, section 2 says that Japa is one of the ten Niyams or spiritual observances that any spiritual aspirant should practice. It then defines Japa and its types as follows—“Japa is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one’s Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering and it’s multiple times more beneficial.”

The *importance and benefits of doing Japa* has been emphasized in the Atharva Veda’s Gopal Purva Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 16 as follows—“Those devotees who do Japa (repetition) with the holy Mantra of the Lord having five steps and eighteen letters by prefixing them with the ethereal salutary word ‘OM’ standing for the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, are the ones to whom the Lord voluntarily reveals his true divine and holy form in the form of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma. That is, such persons become self-realised and enlightened. This is also tantamount to Brahm-realisation.

Hence, those who are desirous of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle them to this delusory, mortal and entrapping world are advised to do Japa with this holy Mantra.’ (16).

The word *Japa* is derived from the root word ‘jap’ meaning to utter. Hence, doing Japa means to utter or repeat the different Mantra which are spiritual formulas in the form of sounds, syllables, letters, words, phrases or sentences such as complete hymns that have a high level of cosmic spiritual energy inherent in them.

The Bhagvat Gita, 10/25 considers Japa as a manifestation of the Lord God (or the worshipped deity) himself.

Japa has three forms—(i) When the Mantras are said aloud it is called ‘Vaikhari Japa’ or ‘Vaachika Japa’. (ii) When the Mantras are inaudible and merely uttered or whispered, the Japa is called ‘Upaamshu’. And (iii) when it is done mentally without opening the mouth, the Japa is called ‘Maansika’.

Further, there are different classes of Japa depending upon their usage as follows—

- (i) Nitya Japa—that Japa which is done daily and regularly.
- (ii) Naimittik Japa—that Japa which is done on special occasions—such as on the days of eclipses or special worship days.
- (iii) Kaamya Japa—that Japa which is done for the fulfillment of certain desires—such as acquisition of wealth or success in any endeavour.
- (iv) Praayaschita Japa—that Japa which is done as a penance, for repentance or for expiation of sins.
- (v) Ajapaa-Japa—that which is done along with the passage of breath through the body as inhalation and exhalation. Usually the Hans Mantra is used for this by acclaimed ascetics.
- (vi) Vilom Japa—that Japa in which the Mantra is repeated in the reverse order. This sort of Japa is usually done to counter the negative effects of black magic rites.
- (vii) Likhit Japa—that Japa in which the Mantras are written down on paper.

Since each Mantra has a Rishi (one who first witnessed the revelation of the particular Mantra and experienced its profound effects), a Chanda (poetical style), and a Devta (the deity to whom the Mantra is dedicated), the devotee is required to pay his homage to all of them before starting to repeat the Mantra or do Japa.

Usually a prayer rosary is used to do Japa, but when one has become spiritually uplifted or has practices doing Japa over a long period of time the need for the rosary is not felt. Then the Japa becomes automatic and natural to him.

A *Mantra* is a Holy name of the Lord; a group of divine syllables or word symbols which have divine mystical powers. Mantras are mystical formulas having divine powers. They consist of letters, words or phrases and used to invoke the blessings of the chosen deity. Each deity has a specific Mantra just like each element in Nature has been assigned specific symbol in modern science. For example, hydrogen is recognised by the letter H, oxygen by O, nitrogen by N, carbon by C etc.

The ancient religious text honouring different Gods were composed in a poetical style called the Chanda. This system of composing the religious text of the scriptures is in vogue since earlier times and such verses are called hymns as they are dedicated to the offering of prayers and honouring the chosen deity for which the particular hymns is meant. These hymns are also called 'Mantras' because they are like mystical formula specific to that deity; they help the worshipper to activate the dynamic forces of Nature and creation as represented by this deity who is actually a personified form of these forces. Each deity had a particular hymns dedicated to it much like we have specific formulas in science or mathematics to solve specific problems. No one formula applies to all the problems in a universal manner, though there are some universal ones also which can be applied to all the cases, such as the Mantra OM which is used equally for all the deities. The reason is that OM represents the supreme transcendental Brahm whose manifestations all these individual deities or Godheads are. This is like the case of one listening to a particular radio station of his choice when he must tune-in to the particular frequency in which that radio station broadcasts.

The Atharva Veda's Hayagriva Upanishad, verse nos. 18-19 tell us how the Mantras should be repeated during Japa, and the importance of the Mantras in helping the spiritual aspirant reach the ecstasy of spiritual realisation by citing the example of the snake and the sound of the Indian lute.

Atharva Veda's Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 12-13 describe the concept of 'Mantra' elaborately. Let us see how this concept is explained by this Upanishad in the context of the Mantras of Lord Ram—

"Verse no. 12 = Whatever deeds and actions an aspirant or seeker does or undertakes to do to achieve his goal are successful through the medium of a Mantra. The Mantra is a medium by which desired results are easily and comfortably attained; they are aids to one's fulfillment of desires and objectives in life—whether mundane or spiritual*. A Mantra makes the attainment of the desired goal a certainty.

A Mantra indicates the result or rewards that can be expected by using it just like a certain ingredient in a medicine can indicate in advance what one can expect by the use of that particular formulation. [This is because each Mantra is like a mathematical formula, and each hymn is like an equation. Even as definitive results follow the use of certain pre-determined formula and equation in scientific quest or mathematical calculations, definitive results are also expected by employing specific Mantras for doing Japa (repetition) or Yoga (meditation) and Dhyan (contemplation) with specific objectives in mind.]

The word Mantra is derived from two words—the first word is '*Manan*' which means to persistently remember something so as to make the mind firmly rooted in it, to ponder and contemplate upon it, to deeply think about it and meditate on it so that one can arrive at some certain conclusion about the truth of that particular thing, while the second word '*Taan*' means to give freedom and protection from some kind of torment or miserable condition, to deliver someone from his miseries and predicaments etc. Hence, a Mantra is an instrument by the help of which a person can find spiritual liberation and deliverance from his worldly torments and

miseries. This is achieved by concentrating upon the Mantra, by relying upon its mystical powers and spiritual potentials, and using it to do meditation and contemplation. Constant repetition of the Mantra helps to multiply its effect and reinforce its earlier benefits. [Repetition of the Mantra is necessary for its full benefits to accrue and take effect. It's just like the case of a patient having to repeat a medicine over a long period of time to get rid of some chronic disease. If he stops taking it before the disease is completely routed, then not only would the disease relapse but it would do so with a vengeance. Another example can be cited about a man's skills and expertise in a professional field—if he discontinues using his knowledge and skills after some time in life, he forgets about them and gets out of tune. All the long years he had spent acquiring the knowledge and the special skill go to a waste if they are not practiced for a lifetime. Similarly, repetition of Mantras and practice of meditation is a life-long process, and a wise man should persevere with them.] (12).

*In the present case, this Mantra that is employed for doing Japa is the 'Ram Mantra' which is a Tarak Mantra (refer Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1). This indicates that the aspirant seeks his final spiritual liberation and deliverance rather than hoping to get some worldly gain by employing it. Being a 'Tarak Mantra' instead of an ordinary Mantra, this Mantra of Lord Ram is the one that liberates the person from all spiritual delusions and worldly snares, and therefore to use it for some worldly accomplishments or gains would be absolutely absurd and ridiculous.

Again, since the Mantra of Lord Ram pertains to the cosmic Divinity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm which is pure Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation, it follows that a person who repeats this Mantra is deemed to be most enlightened and self as well as Brahm realised. He is deemed to have understood the great Truth of the 'self' and the Atma. He is rich with the divine virtues of Vairagya and Gyan as described in verse nos. 4-5 of this Canto 1 above.

While the eclectic Ram Mantra is used by a spiritual aspirant for his liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, other Mantras of various demonination are used by other ordinary people to fulfill their worldly needs and desires, such as the case when one does a fire sacrifice to attain certain objectives in this world and uses various Mantras to successfully complete it. Such exercises are done with some sort of worldly aim in sight, such as acquiring various mystical powers called the Siddhis, or getting established in this world and attaining name, fame, majesty, strength, powers, material prosperity and wealth in this world, or for obtaining victory on opponents, and many other such desires and wishes for which a man usually uses a Mantra. But it is like bartering away the value of a precious gem in exchange of glass or worthless stone.

Every Mantra has a divine aspect; all of them have their own potentials and powers that are intrinsic to them, but it actually depends upon the user how good he makes of it. The wise one amongst them would obviously employ the stupendous powers and potentials inherent in any Mantra to obtain something of an eternal, abiding and matchless value—and what better use can one put the powers of the Mantra than to use it to find permanent freedom from the fetters that tie his soul to this deluding and tormenting world of a continues cycle of birth and death along with its attendant horrors and miseries.

And to top it all, if such a wise man happens to be privileged enough to come across a Mantra that is the best of them all, and which can be thousands of time more effective by putting in the least of efforts, and which gives direct access to the supreme Authority in creation which has the authority and power to grant the much-desired and much-awaited freedom for the seeker, what more can he want. Such a Mantra is this glorious 'Ram Mantra' which is the 'Tarak Mantra'. It is divine, sublime, priceless and matchless in spiritual value, and provides a direct access to the supreme Brahm. This Mantra can provide 'Mukti and Moksha' single handedly; it is one-stop solution for all the spiritual woes of the creature as it bestows upon him liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation at one go. That is why those who accept it as their

spiritual formula are deemed to be the wisest and the most enlightened souls in this creation. A man who comes to know about Lord Ram's 'Tarak Mantra' would discard all other Mantras and accept this single Mantra whole-heartedly as a penance for all his spiritual problems.

This single Ram-Mantra is the letter and the spirit, the essence and the life of all the Mantras taken together. It is like the juice of all the Mantras extracted for the spiritual benefit of the spiritual aspirant. It combines at once all their varied meanings, their uses and goals, their holiness and divinity, their supernatural powers and mysticism. It is indeed like the crown jewel of all the Mantras, and it has the power and potential of all the Mantras put together into a single formula.

“Verse no. 13 = The Mantra of a deity is a complete representation of that deity.”

The *Tarak Mantras of Lord Ram* have been elaborately described in the following Upanishads dealing with the eclectic philosophy pertaining to the divinity of Lord Ram—Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Cantos 2-3, and 5; Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-12, 41-67; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 1; Canto 2, verse nos. 1-3; Canto 4, verse nos. 14; Canto 5, verse nos. 4/1-47; Canto 6, verse no. 1-6.

The Tarak Mantra of Lord Ram is elaborately described in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition which is exclusively dedicated to Lord Ram, as well as in Tarak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition which is dedicated to the subject of emancipation and salvation. The Tarak Mantra preached by Lord Shiva for the benefit of a dying man is that group of esoteric, ethereal and holy words, syllables or phrases that have stupendous magical, mystical and divine powers that can achieve miracles and bestows to the aspirant great potential and abilities, and one of them is the ability to find liberation and deliverance for one's own self, and when preached to others it can even liberate sinful creatures who can never expect to find emancipation themselves. It gives freedom from miseries, fears, torments and other misfortunes that devour a creature. It liberates a creature from the cycle of birth and death, the miseries and fears associated with this world, with old age, death and their accompanying horrors etc. (Atharva-shikhar Upanishad, 2/1; Advai-tarak Upanishad, 3; and Jabal Upanishad, canto 1. The ascetic/Yogi achieves liberation and deliverance by concentrating his internal thoughts at a point between the eyebrows where he realises the supreme, transcendental existence of Brahm, and he mentally one with Brahm after this realisation (Advai-tarak, 2-3).]

छठ दम सील बिरति बहु करमा । निरत निरंतर सज्जन धरमा ॥ २ ॥

chaṭha dama sīla birati bahu karamā. nirata nirantara sajjana dharamā. 2.

The sixth form of Bhakti incorporates such grand virtues as 'Dam' (self restraint of the sense organs of perception and action the body), 'Sheel' (to be courteous, civilized, pleasant and polite; to have mildness of demeanours; to have good and virtues character), and 'Virati' from all involvements in doing so many things in this world (i.e. a sincere and profound sense of renunciation, detachment and dispassion from all material things of this mundane gross world, remaining free from their temptations, overcoming desires and passions pertaining to the world and the urge of the sense organs of the body for gratification etc., not allowing oneself to be unnecessarily involved in countless deeds related to this world because they sap one's energy, bind him to the material world in which the deed is done with the hope of enjoying its rewards, stoking the fire of passions, creating numerous emotional distractions by way of contradictions such as attachments or repulsions, elation or dejection, sorrows or happiness, and so on).

Besides the above, one should always endeavour to live a life according to the doctrines laid down for an auspicious way of life as lived by saintly, pious and holy people. [In other words, a devotee must strive to emulate the example of saints and other holy people whose company he is expected to keep. This will help him in practice to overcome his bad habits that might have become firmly rooted in him and take time to be thrown out. It cannot be done overnight, but require diligent practice. The community of saints in which he is accepted to take a fellowship as prescribed in the first form of Bhakti will serve him in good stead, and their example can be used by a sincere aspirant as a practical guide in his day-to-day handling of the affairs of the world and problems of life.] (2)

[Note—The sixth form of Bhakti is to have self restraint and inculcate noble and auspicious virtues such as humility, politeness, dignified existence, observing etiquette and social norms, to abstain from indulgences and remaining engrossed in multifarious worldly pursuits, and to diligently and honestly follow the righteous and noble path shown by and fit for saints and sages who are wise, erudite, enlightened and sagacious.

The importance of the virtues listed in this line, viz. (i) self restraint, (ii) politeness, (iii) renunciation, and (iv) living like a true saint by emulating their example are also reflected in the sage Valmiki's advice in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 130 wherein the sage lists the following vices that one must avoid if he expects Lord Ram to live in his inner-self—Kaam (passions, lust), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance, hypocrisy), Maan (ego, pride), Moha (attachments, infatuations), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (sorrows, regret, depression, dejection), Raag and Droha (endearment with one and animosity with another), Kapat and Dambha (deceit, wickedness, conceit, pretensions etc.), and finally Maya (delusions and its attending hallucinations).

According to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, sage Valmiki lists some of the grand and auspicious virtues a true devotee of Lord Ram must possess to enable the Lord to live in his heart. Some of these eclectic characters are the following—to be friendly to all and think for their general welfare, to treat sorrow and happiness equally with great equanimity (Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 130); to feel happy by seeing the prosperity of others, and sorry at their misery (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 130); to accept the good virtues of all and leave behind their vices, to suffer for the good of others such as Brahmins and cows representing learned people and humble creatures respectively (Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 131); those who are diligent followers of the various laws and principles of conduct (Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 131).

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram has told Laxman that a person desirous of having Bhakti should follow the path of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility etc.) which enables him to develop the virtue of Virati (renunciation and detachment).

Then the Lord further says that one should live a life according the laws and principles laid down in the scriptures, to develop the virtue of renunciation and detachment from all material sense objects of the gross world along with total indifference to their temptations, and follow the principle of Dharma that pertains to the Lord—i.e. the principles followed by saints and holy people. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 16.

The fact that one should have no vices as Kaam, Mada, Dhambha etc. is reiterated by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 16 while teaching Laxman.]

सातवें सम मोहि मय जग देखा । मोतें संत अधिक करि लेखा ॥ ३ ॥

sātavam̐ sama mōhi maya jaga dēkhā. mōtēm santa adhika kari lēkhā. 3.

The next form of Bhakti, the seventh, is to have a concept of my universal existence in the form of all things in this world, to see the whole creation as my image—i.e. to believe in the philosophy of non-duality; to understand that whatever is visible in this world is one or the other form of my own divine cosmic existence. Besides this, one must treat saints and sages as more honourable and revered than me. (3)

[Note—This universal view of existence of the Supreme Being is the fundamental philosophy of the Upanishads, and it is known as Advaita Vedanta. It stresses in the non-duality of the Absolute Truth which is known as cosmic Consciousness in metaphysics.

This is a system of thought based on the Upanishads, its chief exponent being Adi Shankaracharya. It espouses the philosophy of the unity of the individual's soul, his 'self' or the pure consciousness known as the Atma, with the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the universal cosmic 'Self' or the cosmic Consciousness which is also regarded as the Absolute, the Truth and the Reality of existence. This philosophy of the universality of the soul and the cosmic Consciousness is the fundamental basis of Advaita Vedanta.

References—*Non-duality* or oneness or uniformity between Brahm, the cosmic Soul, and the Atma or the individual's soul has been elaborately explained in all the major Upanishads because this is the basic theme around which the philosophy of the Upanishads is built. Some of these Upanishads are the following—

(i) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8; Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 2-7; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 41-42; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 2-3, 29-31, 43; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 35-39.

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse no.18; Nirālamba; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad.

(c) Rig Veda's Atma-poojo-panishad; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 1.

(iii) Atharva Veda's Atmo-panishad; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 3-4, 8; Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 2; Atharvashir Upanishad (which describes Rudra as a manifestation of Brahm); Tripadvibhūt Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 4-6; Canto 2, paragraph nos. 1-8, 11; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 1-7; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse no. 2-3; Atma Upanishad; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 7; Canto 9, verse nos. 7-8; Mahavakya Upanishad, verse no. 6; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2, Canto 3, verse no. 23; Canto 5, verse nos. 61-65, 77, 79; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 8.

(iv) Sam Veda—Maho-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 7; Keno-panishad; Chandogy Upanishad.

According to the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 8, the supreme entity known as Brahm has unique and apparently paradoxical characteristics enumerated in this Upanishad's Canto 3. This makes Brahm one of its kinds, because it is impossible to duplicate them. Advaita means non-dual. Hence the Brahm that is unique and without parallel is 'Advaita'. The Brahm that is uniform and universal, that is irrefutably and unequivocally one, and not two, inspite of the countless forms in which it has revealed itself in this creation—is 'Advaita'. The Brahm that is both visible as well as invisible, that is here as well as there—is known as 'Advaita Brahm'. The Brahm that is in the present as it was in the past, and would remain the same in the

future—is ‘Advaita Brahm’. Such a unique, divine, incomprehensible and incomparable cosmic Consciousness is regarded by those who are wise and in the know of things as the ‘Advaita Brahm’. This Brahm is an eternal, majestic, powerful, sublime, fascinating, almighty and stupendously magnificent entity.

The metaphysical philosophy of Jiva and Ishwar or Supreme Lord being one and non-dual is explained in many Upanishads, for instance in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-47, and Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77.

The Atharva Veda’s Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77 affirms that there is basically no difference between a Jiva (the living being) and the Ishwar (the Supreme Being). To quote—“The sky element is a uniform entity that is universal and immutable because it cannot be divided or fractioned or portioned. But the same sky is given different names according to the space it occupies—for instance, it is called ‘Ghatakash’ when it is present in the vacant space of a pot, and ‘Mahakash’ when it is considered in its cosmic form that is present outside the body of the pot. And, when the pot is broken, both the forms of the sky, viz. the Ghatakash and the Mahakash, become one and the same, having no separate existence or name. Hence one concludes that the different names assigned to the sky element is basically fallacious, and has its genesis in ignorance of the fundamental truth about the sky.

Similarly, the Atma is universally the same entity; it uniformly pervades throughout the creation, both at the micro level of an individual creature, as well as the macro level at the plane of creation or world at large. Therefore, to treat the Jiva (a living being; a creature) as being separate or different from Ishwar (the Supreme Being) is an erroneous idea based on fallacious premises and ignorance of the truth.

The Atma is the same in all the creatures, and this Atma is nothing but pure consciousness that is an entity established as being divine, sublime, subtle, universal, uniform, immutable, indivisible, eternal, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. It is this same Atma that resides in the gross body of any given individual as well as in all other creatures in existence. This is the micro-level view of the Atma. At the cosmic level, it is the same Consciousness that exists at every level of creation; it is this Consciousness that is the cause of this creation, its development, growth, expansion, and its conclusion. Even after the end of one cycle of birth and death, it is this Consciousness that prevails, and then becomes the fountainhead from which the next cycle sprouts forth, and upon which it rests.

This Consciousness known as the Atma is the central pivot around which the whole wheel of creation revolves. Since the Atma is one and immutable, it is the same irrespective of the level or plane of creation in which it exists. Again, the Atma is pure consciousness and nothing else. Therefore it follows that there is no fundamental difference between the Jiva and Ishwar as both are the same ‘consciousness’ or Atma personified.

The treatment of an entity that is universally and indisputably ‘one’ and non-dual, i.e. which is never ‘two or more’, as having more than one forms or existences is indeed fallacious and extremely absurd.

Therefore, to treat the Jiva, the living being or the creature, and the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, as two distinct or separate entities is fallacious, erroneous and misconceived. This distinction or separation comes because one is not aware of the ‘truth and reality’, and is deluded to believe in the concept of duality or Dwaitya.

[Suppose we have different types of ornaments made of ‘gold’. A wise person is one who recognizes them all as ‘golden ornaments’, and not by their individual names, shapes or sizes, or even their usage. It is raw gold that has been crafted by the goldsmith into so many shapes and sizes, giving the same element known as ‘gold’ its myriad names and different market values. If ‘gold’ is removed from these ornaments, all of them lose their intrinsic value and inherent importance.

Similarly, everything in this creation—and that includes the Jiva—is a manifestation of Brahm. Since the Jiva is a living conscious entity that harbours the Atma, the pure consciousness,

in its body, it has a special relationship with Brahm as the latter is the universal cosmic Consciousness that resides in each unit of creation. In other words, it is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that has transformed itself into the living being known as the Jiva. It is just like 'gold' being transformed into an ornament having a name other than 'gold'.] (77)."

The entire creation is a reflection of one Supreme Being known as Brahm in the Upanishads. It is this single Brahm that has taken as many forms as the creation has taken. For instance, water assumes the form of the vessel in which it is contained; water does not have any specific form of its own. Another example is that of the sky—it fills all the space that is available, is invisible and imperceptible but nevertheless true. No one can actually see the sky; when we see an empty vessel we see its inner walls, but what about the space between these walls? Similarly, Brahm is present throughout creation, but no one can see it. It is a universal entity that is always present wherever there is space.

Lord Ram had earlier reiterated this fact of the universality of soul that inspires the wise and enlightened person to treat everyone alike and as an image of the Supreme Brahm in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 15.

The second point in this verse is to have great respect for saints and spiritually enlightened persons because they are the ones who have realised the presence of the Supreme Lord everywhere. Such individuals must be given the highest regards as they act as the torch-bearers of truthful knowledge of Brahm; they guide the rest of the world on the path that is correct and right. Sage Valmiki has also stressed on giving great respect to sages and saintly people in his exposition on the places where Lord Ram should live in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 129.

Lord Ram had earlier reiterated this need for respect of elders and wise men when he preached Laxman in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16.

The divine and glorious virtues of saints have been enumerated by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38. Then later on, in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-16, 21 that precede Doha no. 121, the crow saint Kaagbhusund also highlights the glorious virtues of saints when he preached Garud, the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu who had come to him to remove his delusions.]

आठवँ जथालाभ संतोषा । सपनेहुँ नहिं देखइ परदोषा ॥ ४ ॥

āṭhavam̐ jathālābha santōṣā. sapanēhum̐ nahim̐ dēkha'i paradōṣā. 4.

The eighth form of Bhakti is to be perpetually satisfied and contented with whatever one has got and never yearn for more, as well as to never find faults with others even in one's dream. (4)

[Note—The state of eternal contentedness is the root of all happiness, and it comes only when one has developed true sense of renunciation from the world and its material charms as well as the desire of the sense organs for self gratification. Sage Valmiki has said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 131 that a person who never wants anything and has genuine and true love for Lord Ram is the one in whose subtle heart the Lord takes up his divine residence.

Again, Lord Ram has told Laxman that 'Virati', or renunciation and dispassion towards the material world and the fascination of its sense objects and their sensual pleasures, is created by following the path of Dharma, and Virati in turn leads to success in Yoga (meditation and contemplation on the Absolute Truth), Gyan (realisation of this Absolute Truth), and Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation).

Another important factor listed here is not to find fault with others. This will happen only when one becomes sufficiently enlightened to realise that the Atma that constitutes the ‘real self’ of the other person, as opposed to his physical body, is an immaculate and sublime entity that is free from all taints, and that it is the same as the Atma residing in the body of the enlightened person at the individual plane of existence, and when viewed from the cosmic perspective it is the Atma that pervades throughout this living world as the cosmic Consciousness. How can this universal and non-dual Consciousness that is immaculate, holy, divine and sublime be corrupt or tainted in one person and holy in another? To treat this Atma differently is the root cause of all spiritual dichotomies that create so much ill-will in this world. This arises from the erroneous conception that the gross physical body is the truthful identity of the individual instead of the Atma.

Of course, the body is unholy inasmuch as it is gross and directly in contact with the corrupt world. But then it is ‘not’ the truthful identity of the creature who is accused of having so many faults—for this identity is the Atma that is faultless!

No one is perfectly without fault, and therefore to say that I am holy and the other person is corrupt is nothing but pretension and haughtiness that must be avoided by a devotee on all counts.

The idea expressed in this verse is reflected in what sage Valmiki said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line 1 that precedes Doha no. 131—“those who discard the faults of others and accept only their goodness and good virtues—the Lord should treat their Mana, or heart and mind, as his good home”. The same notion applies when Valmiki further says in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 130 that—“A true devotee is friendly towards all, and is eager to be of help to everyone. He treats sorrows and happiness alike. He always speaks the truth and pleasant words by properly giving thought to what he speaks.”]

नवम सरल सब सन छलहीना । मम भरोस हियँ हरष न दीना ॥ ५ ॥

navama sarala saba sana chalahīnā. mama bharōsa hiyaṁ haraṣa na dīnā. 5.

And finally, the ninth form of Bhakti is to be simple hearted, to be without any deception and fraud, to be free from all pretensions, deceit, conceit and wickedness of heart, to be straightforward in one’s dealings with all others, to have unwavering and unflinching faith, conviction and reliance upon me (Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being) and on no body else, and not to feel either elated or depressed (under favourable or unfavourable developments and circumstances respectively, because a true devotee is one who has total faith in the Lord and relies solely upon him, who treats the good and bad happenings of the world with complete indifference and equanimity as these things are limited to affecting the gross body and have no reach till the Atma which is the ‘true self’ of the devotee and the pure conscious that is immaculate and pristine pure). (5)

[Note—Absence of deceit, cunning, pretensions, falsehood, wickedness and other negative traits are the signs of the true devotee of the Lord. If one does not eliminate them then he has no right whatsoever to claim that he is a devotee of Lord Ram.

Sage Valmiki has extolled these virtues in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 where he says that Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who ask for only reward after doing everything, and it is to have affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram. Then the sage follows this up by saying that Lord Ram should live in the heart of those who have vices such as Kaam (passions, lust), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance and hypocrisy), Maan (pride

and ego), Moha (infatuations and attractions), Lobha (greed), Kshobha (regrets, sorrow, grief etc.), Raag and Droha (attachments and animosity respectively), Kapat and Dambha (deceit, conceit, pretension, falsehood, cunning, wickedness, crookedness etc.), and Maya (delusions and its attending problems)—ref: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 130.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram told Laxman that “Oh dear, I live in the inner-self of those who have no negative traits such as Kaam, Mada, Dambha etc.” There is another way of interpreting this line as follows—“Oh dear, I am at the beck and call of those devotees who have no vices as Kaam, Mada, Dambha etc.”

As regards having complete reliance upon Lord Ram, sage Valmiki says “anyone who has taken refuge in Lord Ram’s holy feet at all times, whether he is awake or asleep, and who has no other succour and destiny except Lord Ram—verily the Lord should live in his heart and mind”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 130.

The same idea is repeated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130 in which Valmiki says “he for whom Lord Ram is the only relation that matters, he for whom Lord Ram is a friend, father, mother, guru etc.—verily, the Lord should live in the Mana or the heart and the mind of such a devotee as if this Mana is the Lord’s temple.”]

नव महुँ एकउ जिन्ह कें होई । नारि पुरुष सचराचर कोई ॥ ६ ॥

सोइ अतिसय प्रिय भामिनि मोरें । सकल प्रकार भगति दृढ़ तोरें ॥ ७ ॥

nava mahum'ēka'u jinha kēm hō'ī. nāri puruṣa sacarācara kō'ī. 6.

sō'i atisaya priya bhāmini mōrēm. sakala prakāra bhagati dr̥ṛha tōrēm. 7.

Oh Sabari! Anyone who possesses even one of these forms of devotion is very dear to me, whether one is a man or a woman, or any other creature for that matter. But you have all the forms of Bhakti firmly established in your inner-being, so I am definitely pleased with you. (6-7)

[Note—Lord Ram has preached the nine forms of Bhakti to Sabari in Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas also in its Aranya Kand, Canto 10. This will be narrated in Section 2 of this book “Ram Geeta”.

The significant point to note here is that Sabari belonged to a low caste, and Lord Ram tells her that she meets all the eligibility criteria that make the Lord pleased with a creature, that entitles the creature to be eligible for special favour from Lord Ram. Therefore we deduce that the Lord is not concerned with which class the man or woman is born into; the Lord looks for purity of heart and the level of devotion he or she has to shower his compassion and grace upon that person.]

जोगि बृंद दुरलभ गति जोई । तो कहुँ आजु सुलभ भइ सोई ॥ ८ ॥

jōgi bṛnda duralabha gati jō'ī. tō kahum'āju sulabha bha'i sō'ī. 8.

Therefore, the spiritual destiny that is difficult for even great ascetics and hermits to attain, is available to you today. (8)

[Note—The ascetics follow the difficult path of Yoga (meditation) to attain liberation and deliverance for their souls. This most sought-after and eclectic destiny is now available to Sabari. What it is, is hinted in the next line—]

मम दरसन फल परम अनूपा । जीव पाव निज सहज सरूपा ॥ ९ ॥
 mama darasana phala parama anūpā. jīva pāva nija sahaja sarūpā. 9.

The supreme reward of a creature having my holy vision is that he is able to attain his natural and truthful form. That is, he becomes self-realised, wise and enlightened. He attains knowledge of his truthful ‘self’ as being the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and that it is the same as the cosmic super Consciousness known as Brahm. (9)

[Note—When this happens, the creature overcomes all delusions and their attendant spiritual fetters. With self-realisation—which entails the creature becoming aware of his ‘truthful self’ as being the Atma which is pure consciousness and a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma or the cosmic super Consciousness—the creature becomes enlightened about the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being. He realises that both these entities—the Atma and the Parmatma—are the same, albeit existing in different planes. This realisation of the truth of his own ‘self’ vis-à-vis the Supreme Self breaks him free from the fetters of spiritual ignorance and delusions.

A wise, self-realised and enlightened creature begins to understand that the gross body is not his truthful self, and therefore true liberation is to detach the Atma from the body. When this is done by becoming disinterested in the urges of the gross body and its craving for self gratification and seeking appeasement through the numerous sense objects of the world, the creature is said to have attained ‘Jivan Mukti’—i.e. to be liberated from the shackle of the body even while the creature is alive in a conventional manner. When he leaves this gross body—as when he dies in the physical sense or when his vital winds known as the Pran voluntarily leave the body during higher echelons of Yoga—he is said to have attained ‘Videha Mukti’, i.e. liberation that comes by actually shedding the physical gross body.]

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Canto 1.4

Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to the Chanda that precedes Doha no. 46 in which the Lord has preached Narad, the celestial sage and one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu who is the sustainer and protector of creation, the second of the Trinity Gods, and deemed to be the cosmic form of the Supreme Being who had revealed himself as Lord Ram.

After providing deliverance to Sabari, Lord Ram proceeded ahead in the forest on his onward journey to Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom where, according to Sabari, he would meet Sugriv, the exiled brother of the king of the monkeys named Baali, who lived near the lake known as Pampa. The Lord should befriend him, and Sugriv would tell him more about the direction in which Sita was taken by her abductor.

So, Lord Ram reached lake Pampa, bathed in its fresh water, and felt very happy and refreshed. He was sitting relaxed when all the Gods came to pay their obeisance to

him. It was then that the celestial sage Narad came to Lord Ram and bowed before the Lord reverentially. The Lord lifted him and affectionately embraced the sage. The sage politely asked the Lord to grant him a boon, and the Lord replied that there is nothing in this world that he cannot give Narad if he so wished. So Narad asked the Lord something for the welfare of the entire world—he requested the Lord that his divine and holy name, i.e. ‘Ram’, which is the supreme and the most exalted of all the holy and divine names of all the Gods, should shine majestically like a beautiful full moon amongst countless stars in the subtle sky representing the heart of all devotees in the night that is symbolized by Bhakti (devotion).

Lord Ram gladly granted Narad this boon. Then Narad bowed cheerfully in the holy feet of the Lord.

This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41, to Doha no. 42, Kha.

After that, finding Lord Ram very pleased and in a cheerful mood, Narad asked the Lord why did he not allow him to marry when he was eager to do so if the Lord says that he is always grants all the wishes of his devotees? The answer that Lord Ram gave Narad is now narrated as the next divine discourse given by the Lord as part of the ‘Ram Geeta’.

चौ०. अति प्रसन्न रघुनाथहि जानी । पुनि नारद बोले मृदु बानी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ati prasanna raghunāthahi jānī. puni nārada bōlē mṛdu bānī. 1.

Finding Lord Ram extremely pleased and cheerful, Narad once again said very politely.
(1)

राम जबहिं प्रेरैउ निज माया । मोहेहु मोहि सुनहु रघुराया ॥ २ ॥

तब बिबाह मैं चाहउँ कीन्हा । प्रभु केहि कारन करै न दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥

rāma jabahim prērē'u nija māyā. mōhēhu mōhi sunahu raghurāyā. 2.

taba bibāha mairm cāha'um' kīnhā. prabhu kēhi kārana karai na dīnhā. 3.

‘Oh Lord Ram! When your Maya (delusion creating cosmic powers), that is controlled and commanded by you, inspired to act by you, and works only on your instructions, played its cunning and maverick tricks upon me (2), I wished to marry. Lord, why did you not allow me to do so?’ (3)

[Note—Narad stresses here that the desire to marry that crept into in his heart was not something that he was naturally interested in or was due to his innate passionate nature, because as a true Sanyasi, also known as a Parivrajak, he is wise enough to understand and know that for a man who has taken the vows of Sanyas (renunciation, dispassion and non-involvement with worldly affairs and harbouring any kind of passion and lust) it is absolutely a despicable idea to even think of a woman and other worldly ties. So, this desire to marry was not his own fault, but Maya was to be blamed for it, and this Maya in turn is inspired by the Lord himself. That is alright as it

is a fact declared by the scriptures. But since the Lord inspired Maya that in turn instigated Narad to desire to marry, it is natural to deduce that the Lord wished him to marry. For had it not been so, why did the Lord pushed him to the brink in the first place?

The answer is found clearly in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 125, till Doha no. 127. In brief the reason is that once Narad had gone to an extremely pleasant place to meditate. The god of lust and passion, known as Kaamdeo, was summoned by Indra, the king of gods, to go and disturb Narad because Indra erroneously thought Narad wished to usurp his heavenly throne. Such is the fear of a jealous, mean and crooked man whom Indra personifies. Nevertheless, Kaamdeo tried his best to corrupt Narad's mind by his lascivious gestures and decadent behaviour, but failed miserably to sway the sage even a bit. At last, fearing for his life and expecting severe punishment, Kaamdeo went and fell at the sage's feet, asking forgiveness. The compassionate sage did forgive him, but unfortunately he became proud of his ability to conquer the most powerful force of creation, the force of 'Kaam'—the virtually unconquerable force of passion and lust that arouses an overwhelming desire for sensual pleasures and gratification.

After this conquest of Kaam, Narad had gone to meet Lord Shiva, the Lord who has indeed successfully trounced Kaam and is regarded not only as the most enlightened and wise God in the entire creation but is also therefore the patron god and role model for all ascetics and sages. Narad was filled with pride for not only having vanquished Kaam and coming out unscathed from his vicious attack but also being exemplarily forgiving by not cursing him when he came to meet Shiva—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 127. Shiva tried to persuade him to get rid of this pride, but Narad did not pay any heed to it—refer: Doha no. 127, and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

Now, the Lord is so alert as regards the good and welfare of his devotees that he did not wish that this unwarranted negative trait of pride and self-praise should make a foothold in Narad's mind and heart as the long-term consequences would be bad for the sage. So the Lord felt it was his moral duty to bring Narad to his senses, and the best way to do it is to make him fall to the passionate overtures of and becoming a slave of the same Kaamdeo that he was so proud of defeating and conquering.

That is why the caring and merciful Lord decided to inspire his Maya to make the sage fall victim to arousal at seeing a beautiful girl, then desiring to marry her to satisfy his urge for carnal, sensual pleasures. And this is also the obvious reason why the Lord did not actually allow Narad to marry and fall in the trap laid by Kaamdeo as the sage was a Parivrajak for whom marrying and having sex with a woman was a most reprehensible, most despicable and most decadent act. The Lord wished Narad to be free from all spiritual taints because the Lord loved him very much, thought for the fleeting moment Narad thought that the Lord was jealous of him and was creating a spanner in the wheel—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 136, to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 137.

The Lord withdrew his Maya, and suddenly all delusions vanished like a cloud driven away to reveal the bright sun. Narad was dumbfounded, regretted whatever happened, and crestfallingly asked the Lord for forgiveness. The gracious and merciful Lord told Narad then that he need not worry and regret, for it was the Lord who had wished that the things happen as they did happen, because nothing happens without the Lord's wish and consent—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 138 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

But still Narad was not sure why the Lord did not allow him to marry. And the present question and the Lord's answer should be read and undertood in the context of the narration above.

The Lord obviously did not mean any harm to Narad, but was only trying to show him that his exalted stature as a high-class sage and renunciate is due to the Lord's protection, and the sage should realise and be aware that if the Supreme Lord withdraws this protection or decides on something then not only Narad but any or all other power, force or authority in creation would be

able to do anything, or protect themselves or have no support or daring to oppose the wish of the Supreme Lord.

Narad was confounded because left to his own nature and instincts, he would never have desired to marry as he was a sage and such passionate thoughts should not have at all occurred in his mind and heart in the normal course of things. The fact that such desire did arise in him was none of his own fault; it is the Lord-inspired Maya that corrupted his wisdom and intellect, and somehow got the better of his inborn nature to remain aloof from such passionate entanglements. Since this Maya is driven and controlled by the Lord, it simply means that the desire to marry that arose in Narad's mind and heart was not of his own creation but showed that the Lord wanted him to marry. If this is so, then why did he stop him later on?

The irony of the matter is that inspite of being so wise and enlightened, sage Narad could not know the answer. Why? Again the answer is obvious—because the loving Lord wished to remove from him the pride of being a wise and learned sage. Otherwise how is it logically possible that Narad who had himself preached on the tenets, the philosophy and the principles of Sanyas in an Upanishad titled 'Narad Parivrajak Upanishad', which is the 8th Upanishad pertaining to the Atharva Veda tradition, would not know why a Sanyasi should never think of marrying and having a company of woman?

This entire episode of Narad's desire to marry is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124, till Doha no. 138.]

सुनु मुनि तोहि कहउँ सहरोसा । भजहिं जे मोहि तजि सकल भरोसा ॥ ४ ॥

करउँ सदा तिन्ह कै रखवारी । जिमि बालक राखइ महतारी ॥ ५ ॥

sunu muni tōhi kaha'um̃ saharōsā. bhajahim̃ jē mōhi taji sakala bharōsā. 4.
kara'um̃ sadā tinha kai rakhavārī. jimi bālaka rākha'i mahatārī. 5.

Lord Ram replied—'Listen sage! I solemnly and very emphatically tell you, with all the emphasis that I can command¹, that I diligently care for all those who have unflinching and undivided devotion for me, and who worship me exclusively after discarding all reliance upon anyone else. Verily I say to you that I look after their welfare like a mother does for her child. (4-5)

[Note—¹It is important to take note of the word *Saharosa* (i.e. the fifth word of line no. 4. It is derived from the root word 'Rosha', which means to say something with indignance, annoyance, anger or irritation. Therefore, the way Lord Ram began to answer Narad can be interpreted as follows—"Listen sage! I tell you with a bit of annoyance (as I am irritated at your foolishness and lack of maturity) that those who worship me, have devotion for me, and are completely dependent upon me for their welfare and well-being, verily I say that I protect them like a mother protects her innocent young child."

Now, the question arises, why was Lord Ram angry or annoyed or indignant at Narad inspite of the fact that this sage is one of the greatest devotees of the Lord? There are a number of reasons for this. Some have been expounded in note to Chaupai line nos. 2-3 above.

A very long period of time has passed since Narad first desiring to marry, and now when the Lord is in the last quarter of his 14-year forest exile. Yet, the sage is still infatuated with a woman; he had no other question to ask but this silly one—why was he not allowed to marry? He is a Sanyasi, a mendicant sage who is supposed to have complete control over his base instincts and sensual desires. The very fact that Narad chose to ask this stupid question after the gap of so many years, without even thinking what impression it would create, was enough to annoy the Lord.

Another plausible reason is this: Why did Narad select this particular moment to ask the Lord about a woman when he knew that the Lord is frantically searching for his own wife Sita who had been abducted by Ravana? Did Narad wish to tease the Lord that he had prevented him (Narad) from marrying but was himself overwhelmed by grief when he lost his wife Sita? Did Narad, in his utter stupidity, not realise that the Lord had to act in the way he did (lamenting and feeling extremely heart-broken as he searched for his lost wife) because it was the sage himself who had cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being to suffer the agony and pain that comes when one is not allowed the company of a woman he loves very much, like Narad was subjected to when the Lord did not allow him to marry the woman of his choice?

Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 137 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 wherein it is clearly stated that “Narad cursed Lord Vishnu to take a form which he prevented the sage from taking; and since Narad’s face was made to look like a monkey, they will help the Lord when he becomes a human; and the Lord has done a great favour to him by preventing him from marrying—so the Lord will have to suffer the agony of separation from a woman (wife). Lord Vishnu had willingly accepted the curse of the sage, and had instead prayed to him to calm down.”

The spark that caused anger and indignation in the Lord was that he himself preferred to suffer by the sage’s curse instead of punishing him for violating the laws of Dharma whereby a person who has become a Sanyasi is expected to never think, talk or see a woman, the foolish sage is still lingering with his passions and lowly desires. What signal will it give to the rest of the world?

This is exactly the reason why the Lord cited the analogy of a mother protecting her child if he is harmed. It happens that the mother herself gets injured in this process—for instance, the snake will bite her, or the fire would burn her, but she prefers to suffer in her single-minded pursuit of protecting her child whom she loves dearly. The same analogy applies here—the compassionate and gracious Lord prefers to suffer himself in his eagerness to give full protection to his devotee, and here is Narad asking such impertinent and stupid question about not marrying a woman! The very fact that this question has lingered on in his mind even after so long a period is in itself a loathsome idea.

So, in the following line the Lord cites the instance of the mother who leaps to protect her child if ignorantly or inadvertently he tries to catch a blazing fire or a serpent to stress that the Lord ensures the safety of his devotees if they do something that is harmful for them. In the case of Narad it was the desire to get entangled in the numerous problems that a creature faces in this world by marrying and raising a family. It acts as a heavy shackle that keeps him tied to this mundane world endlessly, and the countless responsibilities that come in the wake of the family that he raises leaves him drained of energy and short of time to focus on ethereal matters of the Spirit. Marriage acts like a worldly trap for him, sucking him of energy and peace of mind.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99 it is emphasized that “all men are compelled to remain under the influence of women so much so that they dance to the latter’s commands and demands even as a monkey dances to the orders of the monkey charmer”.]

गह सिसु बच्छ अनल अहि धाई । तहँ राखइ जननी अरगाई ॥ ६ ॥

gaha sisu baccha anala ahi dhā'ī. taham' rākha'i janani aragā'ī. 6.

When a small and innocent child runs to catch hold of fire or a serpent (thinking that they are playthings, not aware that they are very dangerous and will kill him instead), the mother instantly leaps forward to pull the child away from danger. (6)

[Note—The Lord means that he also is extremely careful and vigilant that his devotees who rely upon him completely like the child is on his mother are not brought to any harm whatsoever. In the case of Narad, it was his desire to enjoy the sensual pleasures that come by marrying, but which would have been detrimental for his spiritual welfare and unfettered freedom that he now enjoys. A true devotee is like a child not only because his mind and heart are pure and free from all worldly corruptions and entanglements like that of a child, but also because he is totally dependent upon the Lord just like the little child is upon his mother.]

प्रौढ़ भएँ तेहि सुत पर माता । प्रीति करइ नहिं पाछिलि बाता ॥ ७ ॥

prauṛha bha'eṁ tēhi suta para mātā. prīti kara'i nahim pāchili bātā. 7.

When the little child grows up, the mother continues to love him but she is no longer so worried for his safety and well-being as when he was an infant or a small innocent child, because as an adult he is able to take care of himself better, fend for himself, and think and act for himself. (7)

मोरें प्रौढ़ तनय सम ग्यानी । बालक सुत सम दास अमानी ॥ ८ ॥

mōrēṁ prauṛha tanaya sama gyānī. bālaka suta sama dāsa amānī. 8.

Those who are 'Gyanis' (i.e. those who are known as wise, learned, self-realised and enlightened men) are like my grown-up children.

On the other hand, those who are my ardent followers and devotees who are completely dependent upon me for all their welfare and needs are like the innocent child who is completely dependent upon his mother for everything in this world (and therefore like the mother it becomes my responsibility to take meet their genuine needs, as well as to care of them and their welfare). (8)

[Note—Here, Lord Ram compares himself to the mother, and the creature as her off spring. This is indeed true because Lord Ram is the incarnate Supreme Being who is the cosmic Creator of whatever exists in this world. According to the Upanishads, the entire creation was conceived and is nourished by the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. This Viraat is also known as Lord Vishnu who had manifested as Lord Ram. Vishnu is responsible for protection, sustenance and well-being of the world. So, to compare himself with the mother who conceives the child in her womb, nourishes him, and finally gives him birth is most appropriate.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43, Lord Ram told the citizens of Ayodhya who had assembled to hear his words of wisdom that “that follower or devotee is extremely dear to me who faithfully carries out my orders and principles laid out by me (and codified as the many laws of Dharma, the laws of proper conduct and morality)”.]

जनहि मोर बल निज बल ताही । दुहु कहँ काम क्रोध रिपु आही ॥ ९ ॥

janahi mōra bala nija bala tāhī. duhu kaham' kāma krōdha ripu āhī. 9.

My devotee has only my strength as he is completely reliant upon me, whereas those who have Gyan rely upon their own strength for their spiritual welfare. But both of them have

common enemy—such as Kaam (worldly passions, lust, yearnings etc.) and Krodha (anger). (9)

[Note—All the worldly corruptions and vices are like the enemy of a creature. They are compared to the ‘enemy’ because they will never allow the creature to rest in peace if they are not conquered and crushed.

In this context, sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that “Bhakti is the spiritual victory that is obtained by protecting oneself with a shield symbolized by Vairagya (deep sense of renunciation, detachment, non-involvement and dispassion), and a sword symbolized by Gyan (wisdom, enlightenment and awareness of the Truth and Reality) to fight the enemy represented by Mada (arrogance, ego, hypocrisy etc.), Lobha (greed) and Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations) and other such vices”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 120 Kha.

The countless spiritual faults that torment the innocent creature are called the *Vikaars*. They are the numerous faults, shortcomings, imperfections, drawbacks or errors and blemishes in the character of a creature that cast a shadow on the otherwise ideal, immaculate and perfect nature of the subject under consideration. These Vikaars are like the dark shadow of the earth that eclipses the bright disc of the beautiful moon during the lunar eclipse. In other words, they prevent the original beauty and shine of the subject to come to the fore by casting a dark veil of evil tendencies and traits over its surface like the case of the solar eclipse when the moon prevents the brilliant splendour of the sun from being viewed from earth by coming in between the sun and the earth during the solar eclipse.

The Varaaha Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 24, asserts that the best method to get rid of the numerous Vikaars is to burn them or eliminate them as soon as they raise their head. To quote—“When worldly negative traits called the ‘Vikaars’ such as ‘Raag’ (attachments, infatuations, attractions and strong yearnings for anything or anyone in this material world) etc. are first observed to be making their appearance, and a wise man uses his discrimination and intelligence to burn (eliminate) them in their infancy, there is no scope of their developing into full blown traits (which would then be most difficult to uproot and a cause of must dismay and agony for the man later on) (24).”

The Yogattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 14-15 stress that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality as well as Yoga or meditation and contemplation are the two important tools to overcome the various faults that engulf the creature and cause a hindrance in his spiritual progress. To quote—

“Verse no. 14 = [The following verses describe the ways to overcome the different faults and shortcomings enumerated above.]

Now I shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the Atma. Say, how can Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of Yoga (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul from the torments of the trap in which the Atma has been allowed to fall due to ignorance? (14).

“Verse no. 15 = Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan also cannot bestow Moksha. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining Moksha (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy, a harmony between both Gyan and Yoga. That is, they should employ both Gyan and Yoga in a well coordinated and synchronized manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).”

The 19 *Vikaars* or faults—The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen *Vikaars* or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual's soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement.

To quote—"Verse no. 10-11 = Some of the inherent faults, shortcomings, imperfections and drawbacks that mire the creature's spiritual progress and pull him down from reaching the high of spiritual achievement that would make him equivalent to the supreme Soul of creation are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled), Bhaye (fear, consternation and perplexities arising out of uncertainties, confusions and other factors such as fear from death and enemy, fear of failure and its attending shame, fear of sufferings of the body due to old age and diseases etc.), Moha (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging to this material world and attractions for the illusive charms that its sense objects offer, along with their sensual pleasures and comforts), Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Raja (the quality of remaining engrossed in this world of material objects, to think that one is the doer of deeds and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds etc.), the problems associated with the cycle of Janma and Mrityu (birth and death), Kaarpanya or Kripantaa (to be miserly and pinch-fisted, shallow-hearted and small-minded, frugal, illiberal, niggardly, avaricious, stingy), Shok (grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds), Standra (sleepiness, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties), Kshudha (hunger) and Pipasa (thirst) [10],-----

-----Tirshnaa (thirst for acquiring and enjoying worldly things and desire for self gratification; greed, avarice and rapacity for the material world and its sense objects and their enjoyments), Lajja (shame at doing something dishonourable and ignominious) and its attendant fear of losing face, self respect, dignity and position in society, all sorts of Dukha and Vishaad (sorrows, miseries, agonies, grieving, lamentations, feeling of gloom and guilt, melancholy, sadness, depression, dejection, low-spirited etc.), and Harsh (the opposite of Dukha and Vishaad; the feeling of elation, happiness, joy, ecstasy and exhilaration; to feel glad, cheerful and joyous).

These are the shortcomings or imperfections that cast their shadow on the otherwise immaculate and prefect Atma of the creature, thereby miring it in a number of unwarranted problems and separating it from its pure nature. Until the creature is freed from their clutches or tainting effects, he cannot ever hope to become as pure as the Shiva, i.e. the creature cannot attain his true primary nature which is pristine pure, uncorrupt, truthful, auspicious, neutral and beautiful like the form of Shiva [11]. (10-11)."]

यह बिचारि पंडित मोहि भजहीं । पाएहुँ ग्यान भगति नहिं तजहीं ॥ १० ॥
yaha bicāri paṇḍita mōhi bhajahīm. pā'ēhum'gyāna bhagati nahim tajahīm. 10.

Considering all these factors and keeping in mind the virtues of Bhakti, those who are wise and intelligent, those who know the reality and the truth, those who understand the fundamental meaning and the essence of the maxims and axioms of the scriptures—they verily prefer to have Bhakti for me (in comparison to following the path of Gyan for their spiritual welfare, to access happiness, peace and bliss, and to attain liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation).

Therefore, inspite of them having access to Gyan, i.e. though they are learned, wise, self-realised and enlightened, they never abandon Bhakti and barter it for exclusive Gyan. [In other words, inspite of having knowledge of the various other powerful and potent tools that will help them attain their spiritual goals, those who are intelligent and discriminating always rely upon Bhakti as a sure-shot and easy method to reach the same goal without the risks and hassles that are natural in the path of Gyan.] (10)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 115, till Doha no. 120, the crow-saint Kaagbhusund has elaborately described to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, the virtues of Bhakti (devotion and love for Lord God) vis-à-vis Gyan (acquisition of wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge of the various metaphysical principles and becoming skillful in various tools that help a creature realise his spiritual objectives).

During this discourse, Kaagbhusund stresses that—

(i) to pursue Gyan at the cost of Bhakti is like not paying attention the Kaamdheni cow (the all wish-fulfilling cow) living in one's own home and roaming around searching for milk from a swallow wort plant—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 115;

(ii) if anyone abandons Bhakti and seek spiritual happiness elsewhere, then he is absolutely stupid and block-head who wishes to cross the vast ocean without a ship—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 115;

(iii) the path of Gyan is like a double-edged sword; oh king of birds (Garud)—it does not take time to fall from this path and get mortally wounded—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119;

(iv) by following the path of Bhakti, one is able to get freedom from his destiny that shackles a creature endlessly to this mundane world and its equally endless cycle of birth and death—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119;

(v) Bhakti for Lord Ram is like a self-illuminated and all wish-fulfilling gem that gives eternal illumination (self-realisation, enlightenment, wisdom, peace, contentedness, bliss, happiness etc by removing the ghost of darkness) to the inner-self of the creature without the need for any artificial lamp that needs a wick or oil to keep lighted—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 120;

And (vi) if this gem-like Bhakti lives in the heart of a creature, then he does not have to suffer in the least from any kind of sorrow and grief—refer: Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precede Doha no. 120.]

दो०. काम क्रोध लोभादि मद प्रबल मोह कै धारि ।

तिन्ह महुँ अति दारुन दुखद मायारूपी नारि ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

kāma krōdha lōbhādi mada prabala mōha kai dhāri.

tinha maham^āati dārūna dukhada māyārūpī nāri. 43.

Kaam, Krodha, Lobha etc. are like a huge and formidable army of Mada.

Out of them, a woman who represents a personified form of Maya (delusions, attachments, infatuations) that acts like fetters for the creature is the most vicious, the fiercest and the most troublesome. (Doha no. 43)

[Note— In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 121 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 28-37, saint-crow Kaagbhusund enumerates the following faults of the Mana (mind and heart) that torment the creature interminably—Moha (worldly attachments, infatuations, attractions) is the root of all troubles—refer: Chaupai line no. 29; Kaam (passions) is like the painful disease of rheumatism, Lobha (greed) is like cough, Krodh (anger) is like the hot bile which creates heartburn—refer: Chaupai line no. 30; the desire for gratifying the organs of the body, and to acquire things that are innumerable and unreachable, known as ‘Vishaya’ (temptations of the material sense objects of the world which have a tendency to attract their relevant sense organs towards them to seek gratification) and ‘Manorath’ (having desires for such objects and seeking self gratification), are like the disease that create a lot of pain—refer: Chaupai line no. 32; Mamta (attachments, infatuations with near and dear ones, with the body, the world and its material things and their charms, with one’s material possessions, etc.) is like eczema, Irshya (jealousy) is like its itch, Harsh and Vishaad (to respectively feel elated and happy, or depressed and dejected) are like the disease of the throat—refer: Chaupai line no. 33; to burn in jealousy and have envy towards other by watching them happy and prosperous is like the wasting disease, and wickedness, cunning, conceit, deceit, pretensions and other vices are like leprosy—refer: Chaupai line no. 34; Ahankar (false pride, ego, vanity) is like the formation of knots and stones or arthritis, Dambha, Kapat (deceit, conceit, pretension, fraud, wickedness, crookedness) and Maan (arrogance, hypocrisy, ego) are like the diseases of the nerves and veins—refer: Chaupai line no. 35; Trishna (severe yearning for the world and its material sense objects) is like dropsy; and the three types of desires (for son, wealth and honour) are like the ague fever—refer: Chaupai line no. 36; Matsarya (ill-will, jealousy, malice) and Avidya (lack of wisdom and discrimination) are like two types of severe fever—refer: Chaupai line no. 37.]

चौ०. सुनु मुनि कह पुरान श्रुति संता । मोह बिपिन कहूँ नारि बसंता ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

sunu muni kaha purāna śruti santā. mōha bipina kahūṁ nāri basantā. 1.

Listen sage! The ancient scriptures such as the Purans and the Srutis (Vedas that were transmitted orally by the process of telling and hearing, hence known as the ‘Sruit’, i.e. one that is heard), as well as the wise sages, seers and saints have unanimously asserted that a woman is akin to the spring season that makes the forest representing the negative virtue of ‘Moha’ (attachments, infatuations, attractions etc.) to develop, to get denser and richer, to become more verdant, to bloom and to multiply in variety.

[That is, all the problems that a man faces due to his involvement in the world and its entangling affairs can be avoided if one avoids the company of a woman. The woman is the cause of many negative qualities in a man which he would not have faced had he guarded himself from any sort of attachment to a woman or from having anything to do with her.] (1)

[Note—To explain how the company of women can entangle a man in worldly fetters, the poet Tulsidas has drawn this parallel from Nature. The trees that look dried up and withered after the severity of winter begin to become green, sprout new shoots, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits with the arrival of the spring season. In fact, this part of the year derives its name from this natural phenomenon that new life begins to ‘spring’ forth after hibernating during the cold months of the winter season. Normally the trees require water for development and growth, but

during the spring season life springs up on its own without needing any external infusion of life-giving elements.

Animals, insects and birds also arrive with the onset of the spring season. There is a lot of activity and cheer in the forest which was cold and foreboding during the chilly period of winter.

Similarly, once one marries and has a wife, a number of entanglements come in its wake—for instance, there is a new family to take care of, requiring the need for money, food, homestead, clothes etc. This necessitates involvement in worldly affairs, and the latter is like the bait which a normal fish finds virtually impossible to resist. And even if a man has the resilience and patience to desist from falling to temptations, a lot of his energy is spent merely in this effort to keep the mind and body under check. Passions, lust, greed, desires, wishes, expectations, hopes, jealousy, ill-will, pride, anger—and so many other negative emotions are bound to ‘spring forth’ automatically when they find the ground fit for breeding. The man then finds himself sucked and stuck in this pit which whirls him viciously like a swiftly turning whirlpool, flinging him from one misery to grief.

Moha is said to be the king of all vices, and it is the springboard of the rest of vices that come running in as soon as they find the person engaged in Moha. In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 235 it is said that—“The king symbolized by the auspicious virtue of Vivek (wisdom, analytical intellect and the power of discrimination) who has conquered the king symbolized by the negative virtue of Moha along with his army (consisting of the chain of other vices and demeaning qualities that come quickly as soon as Moha comes) can rule fearlessly, and without any obstacles and intrigues. In the kingdom of such a king (who has conquered Moha), there is always happiness, cheer, wealth and prosperity.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 29 that precedes Doha no. 121 it is said that—“Moha is the root cause of all spiritual problems and troubles which torment the creature like so many horrifying diseases. From it arises so many countless miseries, problems, torments and grief that are like the pain that accompanies these chronic diseases.”

The spring season is also likened to a king; it is said to be the king of seasons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 86 where ‘Basant’, the spring season, is called the ‘Rituraaja’—the ‘king of seasons’.

One can imagine the power and punch of the vicious army of these two kings, the ‘Spring’ and ‘Moha’, when they join hands to conquer the creature, imprison him and enslave him for life!]

जप तप नेम जलाश्रय झारी । होइ ग्रीष्म सोषइ सब नारी ॥ २ ॥

japa tapa nēma jalāśraya jhārī. hō'i grīṣama sōṣa'i saba nārī. 2.

A woman is like the hot summer season that dries up all sources of water represented by accumulation of auspicious spiritual virtues that come as a result of doing Japa (repetition of the Lord's holy name), Tapa (austerity, penance and hardships undertaken for one's spiritual welfare), and Niyam (observance of sacraments and strict religious codes of conduct). (2)

[Note—In this line, company of woman is likened to the hot summer season during which a creature is tormented by scorching heat and rapidly dwindling sources of water. In other words, whatever good effects that Japa, Tapa and Niyam has produced in relation to the creature's spiritual wellbeing are nullified by the negative influences that are inherent in the company of a woman.

What are they, and how they affect the creature, are enumerated below in the following lines. It must be noted here that Lord Ram is answering Narad's question in which the sage

wanted to know why he was not allowed to marry. Narad was not a householder, but a celestial sage for whom renunciation, detachment and dispassion was the rightful way of thought and conduct. He was a Sanyasi—i.e. a person who is supposed to have broken all worldly relationships and devote his entire life to Lord God. For a Sanyasi it is the most despicable and decadent thing to even think of a woman, what to talk of being overcome with passions for a woman and talk of marrying her. Unfortunately Narad had fallen in this trap. Now, Lord Ram has firmly asserted that if one has submitted himself to the Lord, then it becomes the Lord's responsibility to shoulder the burden of taking proper care and ensure the welfare of such a devotee like a mother takes care of her innocent child—refer: Lord Ram's opening sentences when he began explaining to Narad in Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43 above.

Even the Upanishads that extensively deal with the philosophy of Sanyas stress that a person who has taken the vows of Sanyas should never ever think and talk of a woman. Hence, what Narad wanted was completely unacceptable, and would have led to his downfall had the Lord preferred to fulfill his wishes because Narad was his ardent devotee. Had the Lord done so and allowed Narad to marry, it would have been wrong.

The Lord cheerfully accepted the consequent curse of Narad when the sage became angry at the Lord for not allowing him to marry—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 137.

Therefore, though the Lord himself had to suffer the consequences of annoying Narad by denying him the opportunity to marry as the Lord had to become a human being in the form of the king of Ayodhya named Ram (—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124), the Lord willingly preferred to cope with this curse and its consequences rather than allowing his beloved devotee from going astray from his chosen spiritual path and falling in the worldly trap from which Narad would have found extremely difficult to extricate himself later on. The whole world would then have blamed the Lord for not living upto his self-proclaimed vow and declaration of taking care of the interests of his devotee no matter what happens, even if it means that the devotee feels the Lord is not listening to his prayers or accuses the Lord of selfishness and bias as Narad actually did—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 136, to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 137.]

काम क्रोध मद मत्सर भेका । इन्हि हरषप्रद बरषा एका ॥ ३ ॥

kāma krōdha mada matsara bhēkā. inhahi haraṣaprada baraṣā ēkā. 3.

'Kaam' (passions, lust and yearnings for sense gratification), 'Krodha' (anger, vehemence, wrathfulness), 'Mada' (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy), and 'Matsarya' (jealousy, ill-will, malice) are like frogs. A woman is like the rainy season which makes these frogs (representing the above mentioned four vices) cheerful—i.e. these negative qualities are encouraged, fostered and motivated to become active and dominant over the creature when he becomes passionate about a woman, longing for her and her company. All his wisdom, rationality, morality, sense of propriety, sobriety and conscientiousness are thrown to the wind when he is overcome with lust and aroused by passions for a woman. (3).

दुर्बासना कुमुद समुदाई । तिन्ह कहँ सरद सदा सुखदाई ॥ ४ ॥

durbāsanā kumuda samudā'ī. tinha kaham̐ sarada sadā sukhadā'ī. 4.

Bad Vasanas (bad desires, especially those related to the senses and their urge for gratification) are like the cluster of water lilies, and she (the woman) is equivalent to autumn to make them bloom and feel very happy. [The bad Vasanas are fostered and bolstered by the thought and company of a woman. The woman is regarded as a personified form of Vasanas—passions, lust and desire for sexual gratification.] (4)

[Note—The water lily develops and blooms during autumn. The metaphor is employed to emphasise how a woman stokes passions and yearning for sexual gratification in a man. It is a natural phenomenon like the lily blooming automatically during the autumn seasons even without any request to do so.]

धर्म सकल सरसीरुह बृन्दा । होइ हिम तिन्हहि दहइ सुख मंदा ॥ ५ ॥

dharma sakala sarasīruha br̥ndā. hō'i hima tin̥hahi dahi' sukha mandā. 5.

All the Dharma (good virtues and auspicious qualities) are like clusters of lotus flowers, and the lowly and mean woman is like the chilly winter season when snow begins to fall, killing the lotus. (5)

[Note—The auspicious and virtuous characters in a man are compared to the lotus flower because this flower is deemed to remain clean inspite of living in the dirty water of a pond. Here this pond and its dirty water are equivalent to the world and its numerous taints and corruptions. A man manages to retain his principles of Dharma inspite of having to live in a world full of impurities if he is careful and conscientious. But if a woman comes in his life then this Dharma is sure to wither away and die like the lotus flower withering and dying in winter when snow falls. As in the case of lilies, this is also a natural phenomenon.]

पुनि ममता जवास बहुताई । पलुहइ नारि सिसिर रितु पाई ॥ ६ ॥

puni mamatā javāsa bahutā'ī. paluha'i nāri sisira ritu pā'ī. 6.

Then again, the company of a woman is like the winter season that promotes a dense growth of barley plants symbolizing 'Mamta' (infatuations, attachments, attractions, endearment etc.) that bloom and flourish during this season. (6)

[Note—The barley plant is sown in the winter season, and is harvested later. This metaphor stresses that the company of a woman creates all those emotions that come under the overall definition of Mamta—i.e. infatuations, attachments, attractions, endearment etc. A person cannot keep himself free from these traits once he is attached to a woman.]

पाप उलूक निकर सुखकारी । नारि निबिड़ रजनी अँधिआरी ॥ ७ ॥

pāpa ulūka nikara sukhakārī. nāri nibiṛa rajanī aṁdhi'ārī. 7.

For the group of owls representing all sorts of sins, a woman is akin to the darkness of the night when they become active. (7)

[Note—The owl becomes active during the darkness of night. The ‘darkness of the night’ stands for all delusions and ignorance as well as everything that is unrighteous, illegal, inauspicious, unholy, unethical and improper. The owl represents a man who indulges in all sorts of evil deeds just to please the woman of his passionate desires and keep her under his control. He will go to any length to charm the woman with whom he is infatuated, throwing all guard to the wind. He acts surreptitiously and cunningly, is full of pretensions and deceit, uses all means, good or bad, that come to his mind to woo her and court her into submission, and then keep a tight grip on her, all of which are metaphorically symbolized by the owl who sees in the darkness of the night instead of the light of the sun—because a man who is overwhelmed by passions and lust loses all sense of bearing, and his wisdom, rationality and intelligent thinking powers are pushed aside to give way to base sensual instincts and passions that are aroused by the woman.]

बुधि बल सील सत्य सब मीना । बनसी सम त्रिय कहहिं प्रबीना ॥ ८ ॥

budhi bala sīla satya saba mīnā. banasī sama triya kahahim prabīnā. 8.

Wise men assert that a woman is like the fishing rod that is used to catch fish symbolized by such glorious virtues as one’s Buddhi (intellect), Bal (strength, vigour, vitality), Sheel (various auspicious virtues and character such as politeness, sobriety, civility, courteousness etc.), and Satya (truthfulness). (8)

[Note—A man loses his morality, strength of character, his ability to think rationally and wisely, his politeness and sober behaviour, and to be truthful and honest once he allows himself to be trapped by the bait thrown by a woman. The passion, lust and desire for sensual pleasure that comes with association of woman are such an overwhelming proposition that a man’s wisdom and intellect are eclipsed, and instead, delusions, moral decadence and mental turpitude take over.]

दो०. अवगुन मूल सूलप्रद प्रमदा सब दुख खानि ।

ताते कीन्ह निवारन मुनि मैं यह जियँ जानि ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

avaguna mūla sūlaprada pramadā saba dukha khāni.
tātē kīnha nivārana muni maim yaha jiyam jāni. 44.

A young woman is like a root from which arise all sorts of bad habits, characters and qualities (like so many shoots of a tree). She is the cause of all sorts of worldly and spiritual miseries, entanglements and torments (that rob the man of his peace and happiness). She is like the treasure trove that opens the Pandora’s Box of all sorrows, grief and horrors for the man (who falls in her trap and becomes infatuated with her).’ (Doha no. 44)

[Note—A careless reading of the above teaching of Lord Ram will lead to the wrong deduction that women are being derided and insulted. This is not the case at all. The teaching must be understood in the correct context and the proper perspective.

Narad was not a householder; he was a Parivrajak, a Sanyasi, and a sage who is expected to remain aloof from and untainted by such emotions as getting infatuated with a woman, and from becoming passionate enough to desire to marry her at any cost, and when denied this opportunity, to lose his patience and go the extent of committing a sin by cursing the benevolent and loving Lord God himself who was simply trying to protect the devotee from falling into a trap, as Narad unfortunately did. For a Sanyasi it is completely unacceptable to think of women, let alone to have a desire to marry her and become mad after her, as Narad was.

This same story of Lord Ram known as the Ram Charit Manas is rich with instances of women of immense virtues and glories, such as Ahilya who was in the form of a stone due to some curse but was provided liberation by Lord Ram by the touch of his holy feet. Then we have Anusuiya who was a wife of sage Atri and had blessed Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram, herself. Then there was Arundhati, the wife of sage Vashistha who was the court priest and preceptor of the dynasty in which Lord Ram was born. Mandodari, the wife of the demon king Ravana, too was a wise woman who had known the truth of Lord Ram not being an ordinary man but the Supreme Being himself.

What more, even Sita herself had come out unscathed from the raging fire to prove her chastity and purity inspite of living in Lanka in captivity of a demon king who was lustful.

Therefore, the idea is not at all to insult a woman or womanhood, but to drive home the point that one must not fall prey to lust and passions so much so that he overlooks the advice of his wisdom, intellect and mind on the one hand, and transgresses the principles of conduct ordained for a Sanyasi once he has selected this way of living in his life as Narad had chosen. For a Sanyasi and a sage it is not at all advisable to fall prey to passions, lust, infatuations and desires for sensual pleasures that Narad had been victim of.]

चौ०. सुनि रघुपति के बचन सुहाए । मुनि तन पुलक नयन भरि आए ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

sunī raghupati kē bacana suhā'ē. muni tana pulaka nayana bhari ā'ē. 1.

Hearing the words of Lord Ram ('Raghupati'), Narad's body was thrilled and tears welled up in his eyes. [Why—because Narad finally realised how much the Lord cared for his well-being, and how much he loved him that the Lord preferred to suffer in the body of a human being due to the sage's curse but not let the sage fall in the trap of passions and lust.] (1)

कहहु कवन प्रभु कै असि रीती । सेवक पर ममता अरु प्रीती ॥ २ ॥
kahahu kavana prabhu kai asi rītī. sēvaka para mamatā aru prītī. 2.

He thought to himself—'Say, which Lord is as gracious and kind as to have such great love and care for his follower and devotee as Lord Ram! (2)

जे न भजहिं अस प्रभु भ्रम त्यागी । ग्यान रंक नर मंद अभागी ॥ ३ ॥
jē na bhajahim̐ asa prabhu bhrama tyāgī. gyāna raṅka nara manda abhāgī. 3.

He who does not have devotion and affection for such a gracious and kind Lord is indeed of a bankrupt intellect and mind, is most lowly and unfortunate.' (3)

पुनि सादर बोले मुनि नारद । सुनहु राम बिग्यान बिसारद ॥ ४ ॥

puni sādara bōlē muni nārada. sunahu rāma bigyāna bisārada. 4.

Sage Narad said to Lord Ram once again—‘Oh Lord Ram, the wisest amongst the wise ones, and the most erudite Lord! (4)

[Note—Narad has now realised that Lord Ram is wise and erudite. The Lord knew that it was unacceptable for a Sanyasi to marry, but Narad who had prided himself for his wisdom did not realise what a despicable deed he was about to do when he fell head over heels for the woman he wished to marry and then lose his cool so much as to curse the Lord to become a human being and suffer the agony of separation from a woman—the reason why Sita was abducted and Lord Ram had to spend a lot of time wailing and searching for her. Actually this conduct of Lord Ram had confused Narad in the first place, that he wished to learn why the Lord had prevented him from marrying when he himself is wailing and so worried for a woman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 41.]

संतन्ह के लच्छन रघुबीरा । कहहु नाथ भव भंजन भीरा ॥ ५ ॥

santanha kē lacchana raghubīrā. kahahu nātha bhava bhanjana bhīrā. 5.

Narad said to Lord Ram—‘Oh Lord Raghubir (Ram)! You are the destroyer or eliminator or dispeller of the fear of this world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death from which a creature suffers. Please tell me about the virtues and character of saints and pious souls.’ (5)

[Note—The auspicious virtues and noble character of saints has been described by Lord Ram to Bharat, his younger brother, along with other citizens in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 38.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and hence is the Lord who is indeed able to free the tormented creature from all his fears. It is only as long as the creature remains separated from the Lord that he has to fear from the trap laid by the world and the cycle of birth and death. Once a creature finds closeness with the supreme Liberator and Vanquisher of all worries, obviously there remains no cause for more fear in him.]

सुनु मुनि संतन्ह के गुन कहऊँ । जिन्ह ते मैं उन्ह केँ बस रहऊँ ॥ ६ ॥

sunu muni santanha kē guna kaha'ūṁ. jinha tē mairṁ unha kēṁ basa raha'ūṁ. 6.

Lord Ram replied—‘Oh sage, now listen! I shall narrate the noble characters and good virtues of saints and pious souls by the virtue of which I am humbled by them. [That is, by the auspicious qualities that the saints possess they are able to bring the Lord under their command in a polite way just as a wise man is able to subdue the king and make the latter humble before himself.] (6)

[Note—Lord Ram has enumerated the grand and auspicious virtues and characters of true saints elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas—in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 38. We find that more or less the eclectic virtues and qualities that are being described to sage Narad by Lord Ram in the current verses are also reiterated by the Lord to Bharat in the aforesaid verses.]

षट बिकार जित अनघ अकामा । अचल अकिंचन सुचि सुखधामा ॥ ७ ॥

ṣaṭa bikāra jita anagha akāmā. acala akinācana suci sukhadhāmā. 7.

The saints and pious souls have conquered (i.e. have eliminated) the six legendary spiritual faults¹ that taint the creature and prevent his spiritual elevation.

They are free from sins and have no trace of Kaam (worldly passion, lust, desire).

They are steady and constant in their spiritual path, have a steady mind and a focused intellect that prevents any kind of wavering or dithering for even a moment.

They have inculcated the grand virtue of total and sincere dispassion, detachment and renunciation.

They are pure and incorrupt, internally and externally.

They are therefore deemed to be an abode (i.e. a personified form) of happiness, peace and bliss. (7)

[Note—¹The six faults or shortcomings in one's character are the following—(i) 'Kaam' or lust, yearning and passions as well as worldly desires; (ii) 'Krodha' or anger, wrathfulness and being vehement; (iii) 'Lobha' or greed and rapacity; (iv) 'Moha' or infatuations, attractions, longing, attachments etc.; (v) 'Mada' or haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy; and (vi) 'Matsarya' or jealousy, ill-will, malice, envy.

According to the Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4 of Rig Veda tradition, and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 10 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the six faults, which are considered as enemies of a man, are the following—Kaam, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsarya.]

अमितबोध अनीह मितभोगी । सत्यसार कबि कोबिद जोगी ॥ ८ ॥

amitabōdha anīha mitabhōgī. satyasāra kabi kōbida jōgī. 8.

Such saints and pious souls have immense wisdom and are highly enlightened.

They have no desires and wants whatsoever.

They remain contented in whatever comes their way, and can cheerfully do with the bare necessities of life, without harbouring any yearning for anything more.

They are steadfast in following the path of truthfulness; they are firm in their principles that think of nothing else but truth.

They are like wise, learned and erudite ascetics. [Ascetics follow the path of truth, and practice meditation and contemplation. They are not at all concerned by the world and its corruptions, but focus their attention on their inner-self to experience the presence of the Consciousness inside their own bosom. They are able to exercise exemplary self-control over their sense organs of perception as well as action. They have no desires and wants, nor any sort of hopes and expectations from this world. From the perspective of spiritualism they are the ones who have attained true realisation of the truth because they

have witnessed the presence of the Atma in their own self, and the accompanying bliss, ecstasy and contentedness.] (8)

सावधान मानद मदहीना । धीर धर्म गति परम प्रबीना ॥ ९ ॥

sāvadhāna mānada madahīnā. dhīra dharma gati parama prabīnā. 9.

Saints and pious souls are very careful (in everything they do and think).

They give due respect, honour and credit to others.

They do not have any sense of pride and ego.

They have resilience and forbearance; they are patient, tolerant and courageous.

They are experts in the principles of Dharma (i.e. principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility, ethics and morality), and diligently follow this path. [They are steady in the righteous path of Dharma that they have chosen to follow, and make it a point to carefully and diligently follow it without wavering and demurring.] (9)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 38 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that virtually say the same thing as taught by the Lord to Narad here.]

दो०. गुनागार संसार दुख रहित बिगत संदेह ।

तजि मम चरन सरोज प्रिय तिन्ह कहूँ देह न गेह ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

gunāgāra sansāra dukha rahita bigata sandēha.

taji mama carana sarōja priya tinha kahum̐ dēha na gēha. 45.

Saints and pious souls are a treasure-trove of good and auspicious virtues and characters.

They are free from all the miseries, sorrows and torments associated with this mundane world.

[There are countless fears and miseries related to this mundane mortal world. According to Mudgal Upanishad, 4/7 of the Rig Veda tradition, they are the following:-- (1) hunger, (2) thirst, (3) grief, (4) Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations leading to a chain of problems and entrapments), (5) horrors of old age, and (6) death.]

They are wise, enlightened and self-realised so much so that they are free from all confusions, doubts, perplexities, consternations and vexations.

Except my holy lotus-like feet, they have affection for neither their own body nor their household, or for that matter, anything else.

[That is, true saints are totally devoted to worshipping me and my holy feet, and nothing is more dear to them than this. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38 that reiterates the same idea.] (Doha no. 45)

चौ०. निज गुन श्रवन सुनत सकुचाहीं । पर गुन सुनत अधिक हरषाहीं ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

nija guna śravana sunata sakucāhīm. para guna sunata adhika haraṣāhīm. 1.

True saints and pious souls¹ feel hesitant or shy when they hear themselves being praised and honoured, but feel happy when they hear about the goodness and glories of other.

[This is because they are humble and polite, and are not jealous of other people. Information about other people's goodness and glories is like music for their ears because this awareness generates a positive energy in their own mind and heart. Just like bad news irritates a man, good news should make him feel happy—of course if he is not jealous of the happiness of others, for otherwise this good news will have the same negative impact on his inner-self as actual hearing of a bad news.] (1)

[Note—¹The present teaching of Lord Ram describing the virtues of true saints is in favour of sage Narad. The Lord has taught on the same subject, i.e. what are the qualities of saints and how do they differ from non-saints, to Bharat in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 38 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it. These verses reflect the same characters of true saints that Lord Ram narrates to Narad here. The full text appears below in this book “Ram Geeta” in section 1, sub-section 9.

Briefly, it is stressed in these lines that a saint is one who “has exemplary dispassion towards the sense objects and their sensual temptations in this world; has equanimity and forbearance; is a true renunciate who has inculcated the virtues of complete dispassion, detachment and non-involvement with anything that is concerned with the gross world of material sense objects and its temptations; he has no greed and desires; he neither feels elated or depressed as he practices equanimity and tolerance; he has no fear of any kind; he is kind, gracious, compassionate, polite; he is free from the influences of Maya (delusions); he feels sad when he sees others unhappy, and happy when he sees others also happy; he gives respect to all others but remains humble himself, expecting no honour or praises for himself; he is calm and composed, polite and cheerful; is simple, humble, unpretentious and friendly; he remains unmoved, calm and poised whether he is being criticized or praised.”

It should also be noted that these auspicious virtues are also present in devotees of the Lord, and if we examine Lord Ram's listing of nine forms of Bhakti that he taught Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line 4 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36, we will find a remarkable resemblance between the virtues of saints and those of devotees of the Lord. That is the reason why Lord Ram says that both saints and devotees are very close and dear to his heart—reference: (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36; (iii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 38; (iv) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 114.]

सम सीतल नहिं त्यागहिं नीती । सरल सुभाउ सबहि सन प्रीती ॥ २ ॥

sama sītala nahīm tyāgahīm nīti. sarala subhā'u sabahi sana prīti. 2.

The saints and pious souls are even-minded, have equanimity, forbearance and tolerance. Therefore, they remain calm, poised, unruffled, placid and tranquil inspite of all the turmoil and provocations that they have to face. Verily, they never abandon the right path and the right course under any circumstance.

They are simple, polite, humble and unpretentious by their inherent nature.

They are friendly towards all, and love all the creatures. (2)

जप तप ब्रत दम संजम नेमा । गुरु गोबिंद बिप्र पद प्रेमा ॥ ३ ॥

japa tapa brata dama sañjama nēmā. guru gōbinda bipra pada prēmā. 3.

The saints and pious souls are very particular to be diligent in following the auspicious path as advised by the scriptures, such as to do Japa (repetition of the Lord's holy name), Tapa (doing penance and observing austerity), Brat (keeping vows and steadfastly following the path of righteousness and probity no matter what comes), Dam and Sanyam (observing or practicing self-restraint of the sense organs and the mind), and Nem (faithfully keeping the right religious path and observing sacraments and other religious observances).

They should have affection and dedication for the holy feet of the Guru (their moral preceptor, guide and teacher), Govind (Lord God), and Vipra (Brahmins; the learned and elderly in society). [The idea is that they should be ready to serve them faithfully and diligently, with eagerness and cheer, and not as a burden on them. This service will stand them in good stead because when the teacher, the Lord and the learned Brahmin are pleased with them, they will bless the saint with all good virtues and long-term well-being.] (3)

श्रद्धा छमा मयत्री दाया । मुदिता मम पद प्रीति अमाया ॥ ४ ॥

śrad'dhā chamā mayatrī dāyā. muditā mama pada prīti amāyā. 4.

The saints and pious souls should have the following auspicious virtues in them—they must have 'Shraddha' (faith and trust in the Lord and in their Atma, the pure Consciousness that represents the Supreme Consciousness known as Brahm residing in their own self), 'Kshama' (the grand virtue of forgiveness), 'Mayatri' (friendship, brotherhood), and 'Daya' (mercy, compassion).

They should be always 'Mudita' (to remain always cheerful and happy; to not feel depressed and unhappy).

They should have affection and dedication in my (Lord Ram's) holy feet. [It must be remembered here that Lord Ram is not trying to eulogise himself and preaching self-praise by telling others to bow before him and pay their obeisance to him as if he were some emperor who will punish the non-worshipper. Lord Ram is not a human being that this can be expected from him. He is an incarnate Supreme Being who is advising the world what to do and what to avoid if one wishes to be counted as being a saintly and holy person who is worthy of respect and honour.]

They should be free from all 'Maya' (delusions and their attendant problems). (4)

विरति बिबेक बिनय बिग्याना । बोध जथारथ बेद पुराना ॥ ५ ॥

birati bibēka binaya bigyānā. bōdha jathāratha bēda purānā. 5.

The saints and pious souls should also have the following auspicious and grand virtues in them—'Virati' (detachment and dispassion from all attachments and gross sense objects of the mundane world, their pleasures and comforts, desire for self-gratification, etc.),

‘Vivek’ (wisdom, rationality, power to discriminate between the wrong and the right), ‘Vinai’ (politeness, humility, civility, courteousness, dignity), and ‘Vigyan’ (analytical mind and intellect, insight, deep understanding),

They should have a ‘Bodha’¹ (awareness and understanding) of what are the true and essential teachings of the primary ancient scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (5)

[Note—¹The word *Bodha* can be added to the list of other independent virtues such as Virati, Vivek, Vinai and Vigyan. In this case, ‘Bodha’ would mean enlightenment and realisation of the truth of the ‘self’ as the pure conscious soul known as the Atma, that this individual soul is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Soul known as the Parmatma, and that true liberation and deliverance is freedom from ignorance and delusions that had hitherto prevented this enlightenment and realisation.]

दंभ मान मद करहिं न काऊ । भूलि न देहिं कुमारग पाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

dambha māna mada karahim na kā'ū. bhūli na dēhim kumāraga pā'ū. 6.

The saints and pious souls should never have even a trace of such negative qualities as ‘Dambha’ (pretensions, deceit, conceit, wickedness, crookedness, cunning, falsehood and lies), ‘Maan’ and ‘Mada’ (pride, ego, vanity, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy etc.).

They must never, even by mistake, put their feet in a path that is unholy, unrighteous, inauspicious, improper, corrupt, unethical and immoral.

[Which is such a path? The simple answer is that path which is not sanctioned by the scriptures, when one’s inner voice of conscience revolts should one inadvertently step on a path or wishes to follow it under worldly temptations, is the path that all true saints are ordained to avoid as it was a poison for them. Any deed or action, any thought and view, anything in life that is not good for the spiritual welfare and upliftment of the creature, any path that leads to his entrapment instead of freedom, is the wrong path for him.] (6)

गावहिं सुनहिं सदा मम लीला । हेतु रहित परहित रत सीला ॥ ७ ॥

gāvahim sunahim sadā mama līlā. hētu rahita parahita rata sīlā. 7.

Saints and pious souls should spend their time in singing, narrating and preaching, as well as hearing and discussing my divine deeds and stories¹.

They are always eager to do well of others in a kind and gracious manner, without any consideration or reward in mind, without exploiting such help later on to put some pressure on the person helped earlier, or to go around boasting of their good deed or action to get milage from it.

[That is, they do not help others with vested interest in mind. They do not expect to be reciprocated later on. They do not help others to oblige them, but out of their inherent temperament to be kind and helpful towards others who are in need and are distressed. They believe that by helping others and alleviating their suffering to the best of their abilities, they are serving the Lord God—because they have developed a holistic view of existence in as much as they see the same Atma in all the creatures, and know

that this Atma is nothing but their Lord in an invisible and subtle form. So, they believe that helping others is equivalent to serving the Lord directly. That is why they are polite and courteous when helping others—as they are undertaking this auspicious deed out of their own free will and not out of compulsion, and therefore they should not be rude and insult the Atma of the person they are helping because that would be tantamount to insulting the Lord.] (7)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-4; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8, 11 that precede Doha no. 16; and (iii) Doha no. 35.

The spiritual importance and the eternal value of the story of Lord Ram, known as 'Ram Charit Manas', has been enumerated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 34; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 43.]

मुनि सुनु साधुन्ह के गुन जेते । कहि न सकहिं सारद श्रुति तेते ॥ ८ ॥

muni sunu sādhunha kē guna jētē. kahi na sakahim sārada śruti tētē. 8.

Listen sage (Narad)! The virtues and glories of saints and pious persons are so immense and intense that they cannot sufficiently be narrated and explained even by Saaraḍ (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of knowledge, wisdom, speech) and the Śrutis (Vedas, so called because they were transmitted by the process of speaking and hearing). (8)

छं०. कहि सक न सारद सेष नारद सुनत पद पंकज गहे । १ ॥

अस दीनबंधु कृपाल अपने भगत गुन निज मुख कहे ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

kahi saka na sārada sēṣa nārada sunata pada paṅkaja gahē. 1.
asa dīnabandhu kṛpāla apanē bhagata guna nija mukha kahē. 2.

Listen Narad, neither Saaraḍa nor Sesh (the celestial serpent known as Lord Seshnath) can enumerate the grand virtues of saints and sages who are pious souls.'

Narad clasped the holy feet of Lord Ram even as the Lord finished his teaching. In this way, the Lord who is a friend of the distressed and the downtrodden, who is ever so kind, gracious and merciful, has narrated and enumerated the glorious virtues of his devotees with his own mouth—so that there is no confusion about them, so that these virtues and qualities get a stamp of authority from the Lord himself. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

सिरु नाइ बारहिं बार चरनन्हि ब्रह्मपुर नारद गए । ३ ॥

ते धन्य तुलसीदास आस बिहाइ जे हरि रँग रँग ॥ ४ ॥

siru nā'i bārahim bāra carananhi brahmapura nārada ga'ē. 3.
tē dhan'ya tulasīdāsa āsa bihā'i jē hari ramṅa ramē. 4.

Thereafter, Narad repeatedly bowed his head at the august lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram, and then went on his way to the heaven where the abode of Brahma, the creator, is located. [Brahma is Narad's father.]

Tulsidas says that those persons who have abandoned all hopes and expectations from anyone else except Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu, whose incarnation is in the form of Lord Ram), and are steeped in Lord Ram's love and devotion, have complete reliance and faith in the Lord, are indeed blessed and fortunate! (Chanda line nos. 3-4).

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Canto 1.5

Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 7 in which the Lord has preached Sugriv, the king of the monkey race and the Lord's friend whose army had fought in the war of Lanka side by side with Lord Ram and his brother Laxman. The Lord teaches here the glorious virtues of a true friend.

Lord Ram arrived at the Rishyamook Mountain in the kingdom of Kiskindha that was ruled by the monkeys. Here at the mountain, the Lord met Hanuman who became his most faithful follower and the greatest devotee, and at his behest the Lord befriended Sugriv, the exiled younger brother of Baali, the monkey king. Sugriv was forced out of the kingdom due to some misunderstanding between the two brothers. When Lord Ram and Sugriv exchanged notes it transpired that they both needed help. The Lord needed a company to help him find and rescue Sita, and Sugriv needed help to get his dignity restored. It was then that the gracious Lord Ram offered to help Sugriv and extolled the virtues of friendship and the grand principles that govern this relationship.

Now let us read what the Lord said himself in connection with the age old institution of 'friendship'.

चौ०. जे न मित्र दुख होहिं दुखारी । तिन्हि बिलोकत पातक भारी ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jē na mitra dukha hōhim dukhārī. tinahi bilōkata pātaka bhārī. 1.

Extolling the virtues of a good friend and deploring those of an unworthy and unreliable friend, Lord Ram said (to Sugriv)—'It is tantamount to committing a great sin to even see (i.e. have any sort of relation with) a person who does not feel sad and distressed at the sorrows and distresses of his friend. [Such a friend who has no sympathy is selfish and not a good person by any count, and he should be avoided at all costs.] (1)

[Note—In these verses, Lord Ram outlines and extols the principles that govern the institution of 'friendship'. This is the first principle: a person should empathise as well as sympathise with his

friend. To be helpful to others, and not only a friend, is a great virtue lauded by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 31 wherein the Lord has praised Jatau for his attempt to save Sita from the clutches of her abductor, the demon king Ravana, and in the process getting mortally wounded. Since Jatau had offered his life to help others, in this case it was Sita, the Lord sent him to heaven for this noble deed; it is the reason which the Lord cited for the auspicious destiny that Jatau got.

This edict of the Lord is in consonant with what he says regarding the glorious virtues of saints and his devotees indirectly by describing the negative qualities of non-saints and non-devotees as follows—‘non-saints feel most unhappy and distressed out of jealousy, as if they have developed high fever with chill, when they hear someone’s praise; and on the contrary, if they see others in distress and trouble they feel so happy as if they have been anointed as the king of the world’. (Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 39.)

In other words, if one feels happy at the sorrows of his friend then he is to be treated as being a non-saint, and therefore condemnable and worthy of scorn. On the other hand, if one feels sorrow when he sees his friend in misery then he is to be regarded as a saint, and therefore worthy of respect.]

निज दुख गिरि सम रज करि जाना । मित्रक दुख रज मेरु समाना ॥ २ ॥

nija dukha giri sama raja kari jānā. mitraka dukha raja mēru samānā. 2.

On the other hand, a person who treats his own sorrows, distresses and miseries that may be as huge as mountains to be as inconsequential and trifle as if they were only small specks of dust particles, but who regards the misfortunes and miseries of his friend to be as huge as Mt. Meru, though in fact such torments may be small like a dust particle, is indeed worthy to be called a true friend. (2)

[Note—This is the second principle. One should not think that his friend is making a fuss over small problems that one has himself not bothered much when one faced the same situation. A true friend must not find excuses and say that the other person is unnecessary worried at small things which hadn’t bothered him when he witnessed them himself. Instead, he should make all sincere efforts to see that the distressed friend is given all possible help and advice to the best of one’s ability.

The psychological impact of treating one’s own huge miseries to be like a dust particle on the one hand, and his friend’s miseries to be huge even if they are inconsequential on the other hand is that the person is motivated to help his friend with full strength at his command—because he can properly empathise with his friend, fully understand his distress and gauge the intensity of his suffering as he has personally experienced the same sort of suffering, albeit in a reduced scale.

Mt. Meru is the abode of Gods, and is considered as the biggest mountain.]

जिन्ह कें असि मति सहज न आई । ते सठ कत हठि करत मिताई ॥ ३ ॥

jinha kēm asi mati sahaja na āī. tē saṭha kata haṭhi karata mitāī. 3.

Those persons for whom this attitude does not come naturally, those who do not have this praise-worthy temperament and an inborn desire to help their friends unconditionally and

feel intense sympathy for their sufferings—such persons are wicked and selfish (and therefore unsuitable to make friends).

Why do they offer their friendship to others (to deceive them), as they have no moral right to make friends or offer their friendship to anyone? [Such persons as described here have no right to be called a ‘friend’ because this is a bond that requires sincerity, honesty and integrity which they lack. If anyone makes such a person a friend, then sooner or later the former would be betrayed by the latter, and surely he is to become a victim of betrayal that leads to frustration, disgust, a broken heart, emotional stress, agony and pain.] (3)

[Note—One must be alert when making friends; one must be careful while accepting the offer of friendship from others. One must judge for himself if the other person is not offering his friendship for some sort of selfish ends; or if he would be friend only till the time is good, and turn his back when the time gets tough. It is better not to have such friends at all. This is the third principle of friendship—to be loyal and faithful towards one’s friend once one has decided to befriend the other person. Selfish friends are best avoided.]

कुपथ निवारि सुपंथ चलावा । गुण प्रगटै अवगुनन्हि दुरावा ॥ ४ ॥

kupatha nivāri supantha calāvā. guṇa pragaṭai avagunānhi durāvā. 4.

It is ordained upon and expected of a true friend that he stops his companion (friend) from following any wrong path, from any wrong doings or making mistakes of which he might not be aware. Instead, the former should prevail upon the latter and advise him to follow the path that is correct and right.

A true friend must not only motivate his companion to follow the righteous path but also highlight his good virtues and hide his faults (so that the world comes to know of his good virtues on the one hand, and he is afforded protection from criticism by the world on the other hand). (4)

[Note—This is the fourth principle of friendship. A true friend is like a loyal companion and a sibling who would jump to the defense of his friend if others criticize him. Instead of joining the chorus against his friend, he must defend him like a loyal soldier defends his commander or king. This is because his friend and companion has reposed faith and trust in him, and if he also begins to criticize the friend it would be tantamount to betrayal of this faith and trust, which is a grave sin that is unpardonable.]

देत लेत मन संक न धरई । बल अनुमान सदा हित करई ॥ ५ ॥

dēta lēta mana saṅka na dhara'ī. bala anumāna sadā hita kara'ī. 5.

One should not harbour any kind of doubts about the friend’s integrity and honesty in one’s dealing with him (because true friendship is that which is based on integrity, trust, faith, sincerity, truthfulness and honesty).

One should help the friend in accordance to one’s strength, ability and powers.

[That is, one should not avoid helping a friend and find excuses if it is within his means. However, this does not mean that one should be boastful about his abilities,

strengths and powers by giving false assurances to the friend as this would land the latter in a grave situation because he will over-estimate the help that he can expect from his friend and not make alternative arrangements to meet contingencies. This is misleading the friend, and is as bad as betrayal.] (5)

[Note—These are respectively the fifth and sixth principles of friendship.

The trust should be mutual and unequivocal. It is better to first examine thoroughly about the antecedents and worthiness of a person before accepting him as a friend, for the risk is grave. But once the selection is done, there should be no secret doubts because such things create friction and ill-will as some stage, and lead to souring of relations sooner or later. This is more dangerous later on than not making a friend at all—as the opponent comes to know many a secrets that a person would have liked to keep with him in the first instance.

Similarly, the help is to be made in accordance to one's ability. One must be truthful in telling his friend to what extent he can help the latter, so that he is not left in the lurch in the eleventh hour. Besides this, there is other reason why one should not over-step one's abilities—this would compound the problem for the person to whom help is given as the giver himself will land in trouble. Since it is deemed that both are good friends, the person who has been helped will now be in a fix as he faces a moral dilemma and becomes ridden with guilt that his good friend has been made to suffer for his cause. Newer and fresher problems would be created.]

बिपति काल कर सतगुन नेहा । श्रुति कह संत मित्र गुन एहा ॥ ६ ॥

bipati kāla kara sataguna nēhā. śruti kaha santa mitra guna ēhā. 6.

When the friend is facing bad times, one should extend his affection and help hundred times more to him than under normal circumstances. Verily, these are the signs, the characters and virtues of saints and friends according to the Srutis (Vedas, the ancient primary scriptures). (6)

[Note—This is the seventh principle of friendship. It implies that even if one does not show much interest in the daily affairs of a friend during the routine run of life, but should the friend fall upon bad times and face ill-fortune, a true friend should then come to his rescue to the best of his ability, subject to the overall guidance given as principle number six in verse no. 5. The offer of help and succour should be voluntary and selfless, and not done to humiliate the sufferer or bind him in some sort of obligation.]

आगें कह मृदु बचन बनाई । पाछें अनहित मन कुटिलाई ॥ ७ ॥

जा कर चित अहि गति सम भाई । अस कुमित्र परिहरेहिं भलाई ॥ ८ ॥

āgēm kaha mṛdu bacana banā'ī. pāchēm anahita mana kuṭilā'ī. 7.

jā kara cita ahi gati sama bhā'ī. asa kumitra pariharēhim bhalā'ī. 8.

A person who pretends to be a fast friend by speaking pleasantly in front of one's face, but is so wicked and jealous that he criticizes him and speaks ill-will of him behind his back, and harbours an evil design against him in his mind—verily, such a person is like a venomous snake. It is better and helpful to abandon such an evil and wicked friend altogether. (7-8)

[Note—These lines caution us against pretentious and fraudulent friends who are cunning, wicked and selfish. They praise us because they wish to derive some benefit from us, perhaps because we are powerful and influential. But behind our backs they do not hesitate in pouring venom against us. Such persons are no less than traitors living in a kingdom who will betray the king and the kingdom at the fall of a hat. It is better to guard against them like one is alert from a venomous snake, for one does not know when the snake will bite!]

सेवक सठ नृप कृपन कुनारी । कपटी मित्र सूल सम चारी ॥ ९ ॥

sēvaka saṭha nr̥pa kṛpana kunārī. kapaṭī mitra sūla sama cārī. 9.

A foolish, block-head and dumb-witted servant, server or follower, a miserly and stingy king (who is not generous and compassionate), a wicked, evil and bad-tempered woman, and a pretentious, unscrupulous and deceitful friend—verily, all of them are akin to a spear that causes horrible torments as they are the cause of interminable suffering. (9)

[Note—These people behave like fast friends on the surface, but they create more problems and nuisance for a person by his contact with them, and he would have been better off had he been free from their company. They are of more harm than any good for him.

They are like the different kinds of pain inside the body of a man which makes him suffer and writhe continuously, though this pain cannot be seen in physical terms on the outside. The immense mental and emotional stress as well as physical distress and agony such people cause to a person make him tormented as if he is suffering from some severe and chronic disease.

If a servant is stupid or dumb-witted, he will cause his master more headache and troubles than he would have imagined. Such a servant will put the master in great trouble by his foolish deeds.

A miserly and stingy king will extract taxes from his subjects at an exorbitant rate, without bothering about their ability to pay it or if this is causing undue hardship to them. He will not spend a dime for the welfare of the citizens of his own kingdom, and greed for more. In such a kingdom, the people suffer due to lack of basic amenities and facilities. They cannot prosper as they fear that any activity towards gaining prosperity and affluence is useless as it would incite the king's jealousy and he who would snatch their wealth to enrich himself.

A wicked woman is a man's greatest horror. He shivers at the thought of returning home after a hard day's toil to face a woman grumbling at him and teasing him endlessly. An evil woman with loose character brings bad name to the whole family. A disloyal wife and a cruel woman is a bane for any man.

And of course, an unfaithful friend is like a venomous serpent as already pointed out in Chaupai line no. 8 above.]

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Canto 1.6

Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44 in which the Lord has given his wise advice to the monkeys in general. Here the Lord stresses that if a person is in distress and comes to seek the Lord's refuge, then he will

give him unequivocal protection. In general, this principle may be extended to all—i.e. one must protect the meek and the humble to the best of one's ability.

The context of this teaching by Lord Ram is Vibhishan, who was the younger brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, coming to seek his refuge, and the commanders of the Lord's army, chief of them being Sugriv, having doubts about the wisdom of allowing an enemy's brother to remain in their midst. He felt that Vibhishan should be tied and held as captive—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 43.

Lord Ram then assured them that they have nothing to fear, and that the Lord will accept Vibhishan in all circumstances as it is a principle of Dharma (morality and righteous conduct) on the part of the Lord not to refuse a request from a distressed person seeking refuge in his holy feet.

Essentially the Lord says that he is determined to accept anyone who is truly distressed and comes to seek sincere refuge and protection from the Lord without having any kind of deceit, pretensions and falsehood in his heart. To refuse permission to such a person, to deny refuge to a person who has come to surrender himself before the Lord is an unthinkable thing for the Lord as he is renowned to be the provider of refuge to the helpless and the hapless, to the distressed and the miserable, to those who have no other succour and solace in this world except the Lord himself.

सखा नीति तुम्ह नीकि बिचारी । मम पन सरनागत भयहारी ॥ ८ ॥

sakhā nīti tumha niki bicārī. mama pana saranāgata bhayahārī. 8.

When Sugriv expressed his grave reservations in accepting Vibhishan, an enemy's brother, as a member of Lord Ram's group as it is a dangerous thing to do from military point of view because this person may be an enemy's spy pretending to be the Lord's devotee, the Lord assuaged his fears and said—'Friend, you have given me an advice which is wise and prudent (from strategic, defense and military point of view). But I have taken a vow to remove the fears of those who have come to seek shelter in my feet.' (8)

[Note—Lord Ram makes two observations here. One is that he addresses Sugriv as his 'friend', and the other is that he says 'that Sugriv has given a wise advice'. Well, a good friend is indeed one who gives a wise advice that is to the best of his intelligence and thinking. To accept an enemy's brother as a member of the army is never advisable—and so Sugriv made it clear that he does not agree with the view of accepting Vibhishan in their midst. Lord Ram acknowledged this fact by addressing Sugriv as his 'friend'.

But then Lord Ram is not an ordinary prince who is driven merely by worldly considerations; he is the Supreme Lord of creation in a personified form, and therefore has many things to consider before taking any decision. Militarily and from strategic defense point of view what Sugriv suggested was very wise and prudent—that it is not advisable to keep an enemy's brother amongst them. But the Lord is supposed to be giver of protection to all those who are distressed in this world, and therefore he is bound to take this factor into consideration before deciding whether or not to accept Vibhishan as a refugee. Hence the Lord declared that 'he is determined to remove the 'fear of those who come to seek shelter with him'.

When we examine the situation on the ground we find that there are two armies having a stand-off, one is that of Ravana of Lanka, the demon kingdom, and the other is that of Lord Ram and his companion Sugriv of the monkey kingdom. In this situation if Vibhishan has come to

seek refuge with the Lord then obviously there is something very serious that has compelled him to take this drastic step, as it is extremely dangerous to become a traitor and go openly to join an enemy's camp prior to a war. Vibhishan will be summarily tried for treason, hounded by his all-powerful demon brother Ravana, hunted down, tortured and killed instantly if the Lord now refused him permission to remain with him. Vibhishan has taken an extremely risky step, and above all he is the Lord's devotee. So there was no question of denying him refuge.

Vibhishan was humiliated and kicked out by Ravana because he was giving him sane and rational advice that was in accordance to the principles of common sense, ethics and probity—that one should not kidnap someone's loyal wife, and then unnecessary get entangled in a bloody and ruinous war for the sake of a single woman. After being sternly rebuked by Ravana and declared as a virtual traitor for advocating the cause of Ravana's enemy, i.e. Lord Ram, it was clearly suicidal for Vibhishan to remain within Lanka for one moment more. He had no other option but to escape before it was too late. He was scared for his life, and if the Lord now refused him protection it would be against the declared principle of the Lord and would undermine the Lord's glorious virtue that he is a merciful and benevolent protector of refugees, and he cheerfully accepts anyone who comes to seek genuine refuge in his holy feet no matter what the sins of the other person are.

Lord Ram is the King of Ayodhya from the temporal perspective, and the Supreme Lord Emperor of the whole world from the perspective of creation. Each action of his will become a law, a precedent and an example that would be followed by others in the world. Thus, from now onwards it would become an established principle of statehood that a king is obliged to grant refuge to refugees if they are distressed, terrified and fear for their lives, and have come seeking asylum with the king. Of course it is now obligatory on the part of the refuge-seeker to be loyal and faithful to the person who has granted him refuge and protection, and any betrayal will be a horrendous sin more intense than treason.

To the credit of Vibhishan, he lived faithful and loyal to Lord Ram for the rest of his life.]

सुनि प्रभु बचन हरष हनुमाना । सरनागत बच्छल भगवाना ॥ ९ ॥

sunī prabhu bacana haraṣa hanumānā. saranāgata bacchala bhagavānā. 9.

Hanuman, a member of the monkey community and one of the greatest devotees of Lord Ram, felt extremely happy and exhilarated when he heard the Lord's words that he is determined to extend unequivocal protection to refugees. (9)

[Note—Hanuman could not counter Sugriv as he was the king of the monkeys as well as the commander-in-chief of the army, but internally Hanuman did not like the idea of turning Vibhishan away as he had personally known the latter to be a great devotee of the Lord and the one who had been of a lot of help in showing where Sita was confined in Lanka when Hanuman had gone there in search for her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6, till Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8.

Besides this, refusal to accept Vibhishan as a refugee would harm Lord Ram's reputation as the most compassionate and merciful Lord of creation who extends protection to all those who are his devotees and are in distress.

Therefore, when the Lord declared that he will accept Vibhishan inspite of everything else, it was Hanuman who felt the most happy.]

दो०. सरनागत कहूँ जे तजहिं निज अनहित अनुमानि ।

ते नर पावँ पापमय तिन्हि बिलोक्त हानि ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

saranāgata kahum̐ jē tajahim̐ nija anahita anumāni.
tē nara pāvam̐ra pāpamaya tinhahi bilōkata hāni. 43.

Lord Ram declared—‘He who refuses to give shelter to someone who comes seeking it in great distress, apprehending some harm from him, is a very sinful and despicable man. It is abominable and revulsive to even look at such an immoral person. (Doha no. 43)

[Note—The implication of this edict of the Lord is that those who accept refugees irrespective of all other considerations are righteous men, and it is a lawful duty not to turn away someone who has surrendered himself, is in grave distress, and has come seeking unequivocal protection.

When someone comes to another person seeking protection it implies that the former is sure that the latter is able and strong enough to protect him. If it is within the means of the second person then he must never refuse the first person protection, as this will be tantamount to betrayal of trust and faith that the refuge-seeker has in the person to whom he has come seeking shelter. This will also not be good thing from the view of the reputation of the stronger person; it will give the signal that he is selfish and biased.

Lord Ram signaled to Sugriv that if he refused to accept Vibhishan out of any fear, then he will face such ignominy in this world that he would not be able to show his face to anyone later on, chiefly when the people regard him as an incarnate Supreme Being.]

चौ०. कोटि बिप्र बध लागहिं जाहू । आएँ सरन तजउँ नहिं ताहू ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kōṭi bipra badha lāgahim̐ jāhū. ā'ēm̐ sarana taja'um̐ nahim̐ tāhū. 1.

Even if the refuge-seeker is accused of killing countless Vipras (Brahmins), I do not abandon him if he comes sincerely and terrified to seek my refuge, shelter and protection. (1)

[Note—This is said by the Lord to emphasise his determination to accept all those who come to seek the Lord's protection, shelter and refuge. Lord Ram wishes to tell the world that one should not fear harsh treatment and humiliation at his hands just because one is a sinner and has committed some grave error at the time of going to seek shelter with the Lord, as he is ready to pardon him. The fact is that the Lord is extremely merciful and forgiving, and once one surrenders himself before the Lord he has no more to fear from anything. This was the advice given to Ravana by his wife Mandodari on three separate occasions in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6, till Doha no. 7; (ii) (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14, till Doha no. 15; and (iii) Doha no. 35 Kha, till Doha no. 37.

Malyawaan, an old and wise demon who was one of the chief advisors of Ravana, also advised him the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48, till Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49.

And finally, Ravana's own brother Vibhishan had advocated the same thing, and had even assured Ravana that he need not have any fear of retribution or vengeance from Lord Ram

should he decide to surrender before the Lord as the latter is extremely forgiving and accepting—refer Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 39.

But the irony is that those who are sinful and innately pervert do not desire to go to the Lord in the first place—this has been clearly stated by Lord Ram himself in the following Chaupai line nos. 3-5.]

सनमुख होइ जीव मोहि जबहीं । जन्म कोटि अघ नासहिं तबहीं ॥ २ ॥

sanamukha hō'i jīva mōhi jabahīm. janma kōṭi agha nāsahīm tabahīm. 2.

[In this verse, the Lord answers the natural question that arises in one's mind—how can the Lord accept someone as sinful as the one who has harmed Brahmins?]

As soon as a Jiva (a creature; a living being) faces me or comes near me, all his sins, faults, corruptions, moral turpitudes and vices that have been accumulated over many countless births are eliminated instantly. (2)

[Note—From the perspective of metaphysics and the Upanishads, the phrase 'the Jiva facing the Supreme Being' means a creature becoming self-realised and enlightened. Such a creature realises that his true 'self' is the pure conscious Atma and not the gross body that is involved in doing so many deeds, sinful or not, and therefore 'he'—the 'truthful identity of the Jiva'—is not to be blamed or accused for the acts and deeds of the body. Hence, no punishment accrues to 'him'—i.e. to his true self, the Atma. This Atma is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma, the super Consciousness.

This super Consciousness, the true 'self' of the Jiva, is like the brilliant sun shining in the sky; no taints can ever tarnish its image. Appearance of clouds may give the impression that the sun's brilliance has faded, but wise ones know that it is not the truth. Similarly, the countless faults and sins of the world are limited to the body, and they have no bearing on the holiness and purity of the Atma, the true self of the Jiva.

This is what the Lord implies here. Once one has witnessed the truth of his inner-self, once one has experienced the brilliance of the consciousness residing in one's inner-self, all worldly taints known as sins and vices fade into oblivion like the cloud that does not affect the brilliance of the sun's disc.

Now, a controversy is raised. How is it possible for great sinners to attain the Lord who is most holy and divine? This is answered in the next line—that a sinner cannot think of having devotion and affection for Lord Ram. To be sinful and be a devotee of the Lord at the same time is an impossible proposition much like day and night existing together. If one comes to the Lord then it is deemed that he has overcome his sins.

Another connotation is that if a person had committed some mistake in pas but now realises that he had done a grave wrong, then he must be given all opportunities to reform himself, as to err is in human nature, and sincere repentance must be given cognizance. The Supreme Being has taken the trouble to come down to earth and himself suffer as a human being because he is merciful and wishes to provide the world a chance at redemption. Had it been that he simply wished to punish and reward all according to their actions and deeds, there was no need to take this trouble, for he could have easily done it sitting in heaven—rewarding the righteous ones with their desired fruits, and condemning to hell the sinful ones. But that is not the wish of the Supreme Father—he loves all his children alike, and if some of them have gone astray he tries his best to give them a chance for reforming themselves and bring them back to the mainstream of righteous way of life known as Dharma.]

पापवंत कर सहज सुभाऊ । भजनु मोर तेहि भाव न काऊ ॥ ३ ॥

pāpavanta kara sahaja subhā'ū. bhajanu mōra tēhi bhāva na kā'ū. 3.

A person who is sinful and pervert, a person who is corrupt and has vices in him, is by nature averse to having devotion for me and worshipping me. (3)

[Note—This is the reason why the Lord will willingly accept anyone who comes seeking refuge and shelter with him. We can understand this by a simple example. The fire has a natural tendency to burn impurities, but it does not burn the pure metal. When impure god is required to be purified, it is put in fire where all the impurities are burnt and pure metal remains.

Similarly, when a Jiva faces the Lord all his sins, vices and perversions, which are like the impurity of the gold, get burnt instantly, and what emerges is the purified Atma which is like pure sample of gold.]

जौं पै दुष्टहृदय सोइ होई । मोरें सनमुख आव कि सोई ॥ ४ ॥

jauṁ pai duṣṭahṛdaya sō'i hō'ī. mōrēm sanamukha āva ki sō'ī. 4.

If he (in this case it is Vibhishan) has any trace of wickedness or deceit in his heart, then can he ever come to me and face me, surely not! [Lord Ram is making a general statement here. He says that a person with a wicked heart and mind cannot dare to come before the Lord, he cannot even think of facing the Lord. So, in case someone has approached the Lord then it sure that his heart and mind are un-corrupt, or at least ready to mend their way. This is corroborated by the verse below.] (4)

[Note—This line is an extension of verse no. 3, and completes the reason given by the Lord for accepting even the sinful ones as his refugees. He goes on to clarify the matter further in the next line no. 5.]

निर्मल मन जन सो मोहि पावा । मोहि कपट छल छिद्र न भावा ॥ ५ ॥

nirmala mana jana sō mōhi pāvā. mōhi kapaṭa chala chidra na bhāvā. 5.

Only those Jivas (creatures; living beings) who have a purified, uncorrupt and taintless Mana (mind, sub-conscious and heart) can ever expect or hope to attain me or come near me—as I do not like wickedness, vices, deceit, conceit, pretensions, duplicity and perversions that act like moral cracks, crevices and holes for a person.' (5)

[Note—This is a stern warning from Lord Ram. When a person decides to approach the Lord with a petition for surrender and seeking refuge, he must keep this in mind. Lord Ram is all-knowing and omniscient; nothing is hidden from him. No one can cheat him by pretensions and sweet talk. And above all, the Lord is almighty and all-powerful. So there is no joking with him like there is no joking when dealing with a king or emperor. Should the king become annoyed by any remote chance at the petitioner, the latter's fate is too obvious to narrate—he will be at the best thrown in the prison for life if not viciously thrashed instantly and hanged outright.

So we see that after showing his kind side, the Lord now warns cunning people that his gracious nature must not be played fools around with. ‘Be warned’ he wishes to say; if a wicked man tries to play smart with the Lord, then he had it!]

भेद लेन पठवा दससीसा । तबहुँ न कछु भय हानि कपीसा ॥ ६ ॥

bhēda lēna paṭhavā dasasīsā. tabahum̐ na kachu bhaya hāni kapīsā. 6.

After making his intentions clear, Lord Ram turned to Sugriv and assured him not to fear for anything because of the Lord not accepting his advice to keep Vibhishan in captivity. He reassured Sugriv and said—‘Even if the ten-headed Ravana has sent him (Vibhishan) to spy upon us, oh king of monkeys (Sugriv), there is still nothing to fear about at all. [Why? This is answered in the next line no. 7.] (6)

जग महुँ सखा निसाचर जेते । लछिमनु हनइ निमिष महुँ तेते ॥ ७ ॥

jaga mahum̐ sakhā nisācara jētē. lachimanu hana'i nimiṣa mahum̐ tētē. 7.

Oh friend! Laxman (Lord Ram’s younger brother) is strong and able enough to kill in a short time all the demons who live in this world. (7)

[Note—That is, even if Vibhishan is a spy and causes sabotage from within our ranks any time in future, something that you fear the most, there is no cause of alarm—because my brother Laxman can single-handedly eliminate all the demons who exist in this world.

Here, Lord Ram is praising Laxman and his valour to send out the signal that he is not alone here to face the enemy, but has a very powerful brother with him. So not only Vibhishan but anyone else amongst the monkey-and-bear army who tries to act smart with them any time during the war should be warned.

Another reason for praising Laxman in public is to give him honour for all the personal sacrifices he has done for the Lord’s cause—he left the comfort of the kingdom to accompany Lord Ram to the forest, looked after the Lord and his wife Sita during the course of their long exile period in the forest, and was the Lord’s only companion and comrade-in-arm when the Lord was passing through a rough patch in his life. Strategically also it was a clever devise by the Lord—it helped to boost Laxman’s morale and standing in the hierarchy of the army; it acknowledged the Lord’s faith and reliance upon him. The Lord made it clear that he was the second-in-command.

Lord Ram wished to express his solidarity with his younger brother and thank him for his seminal courage and exemplary loyalty. It would not look good if he had directly praised Laxman in private, so the Lord took the indirect method of praising Laxman’s abilities as an able and invincible warrior in public while he was also present to hear the praise.

It ought to be noted that this statement by Lord Ram must not be construed as boastful and bombastic because one may argue that if what Lord Ram asserts is the true case then why couldn’t Laxman alone defeat the demon army, and why he was wounded in the battle-field? Well, the answer is that not only did Lord Ram wish to praise his comrade-in-arm and a faithful companion who had been at his side through thick and thin but he also wished to boost the morale of the monkey army that they have a powerful commander to lead them.]

जौं सभीत आवा सरनाई । रखिहउँ ताहि प्रान की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

jaum̐ sabhīta āvā saranā'īm̐. rakhiha'um̐ tāhi prāna kī nā'īm̐. 8.

On the other hand, if he (Vibhishan) is distressed and has come to seek my shelter out of fear of persecution and punishment, then verily I declare that I will protect him with my life; I will protect him like one protects one's own life. (8)

[Note—Lord Ram has placed on the table both the options to make Sugriv overcome his fears. One is that if Vibhishan has come to spy upon them, no harm will be caused—because if he tries to create mischief, then Laxman is competent to take care of him by killing him instantly. The other option is that if he is terrified and has come to seek genuine refuge, then the Lord is duty-bound and obliged to give him full protection.

So under both the circumstances, Sugriv must bring Vibhishan before the Lord without any sort of fear or reservations.]

दो०. उभय भाँति तेहि आनहु हँसि कह कृपानिकेत ।
जय कृपाल कहि कपि चले अंगद हनू समेत ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

ubhaya bhām̐ti tēhi ānahu ham̐si kaha kṛpānikēta.
jaya kṛpāla kahi kapi calē aṅgada hanū samēta. 44.

The merciful Lord smiled and ordered—‘So, bring him to me under both the circumstances.’

The monkey exclaimed ‘Glory to the merciful Lord’, and accompanied by Hanuman they went to bring him (Vibhishan) to the Lord. (Doha no. 44)

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Canto 1.7

Sundar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede this Doha in which the Lord has proclaimed for Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king of Lanka named Ravana, when the former had come to seek refuge in the holy feet of the Lord upon being kicked out by his own brother, his guiding principle which says that the Lord accepts anyone in his protection and gives him shelter if the concerned person has broken off all other relationships with the world and has come to surrender himself with a pure heart before the Lord unequivocally.

When Vibhishan has bowed his head at the holy feet of Lord Ram and expressed his earnest desire to take his refuge, the Lord welcomed him and assured Vibhishan of his total acceptance. It was then the Lord gave him the reason for accepting him without reservations. It acts a welcome invitation to all the creatures to come to the Lord who is waiting for them with an open arm to give them freedom from all their miseries, torments, vexations, fears and consternations.

चौ०. सुनहु सखा निज कहउँ सुभाऊ । जान भुसुंङि संभु गिरिजाऊ ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu sakhā nija kaha'um' subhā'ū. jāna bhusuṇḍi sambhu girijā'ū. 1.

Lord Ram told Vibhishan—‘Listen friend! I will tell you my innate nature and temperament. It is well-known to Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, Lord Shambhu (Shiva) and Girija (Uma or Parvati, the divine Mother and the holy consort of Shiva). (1)

[Note—It is to be noted here that the Lord has addressed Vibhishan with the word ‘friend’. He had addressed Sugriv with the same word when the two met at the Rishyamook mountain. The glorious virtues of a true friend has already been extolled by the Lord in Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 7 when he met Sugriv.

The Lord now reiterates his stand and assures Vibhishan that once the latter has come to surrender himself before the Lord with a sincere heart, he need not worry or fear from anything any more as it has now become the Lord’s responsibility to ensure his welfare and safety.

We will read in the Lord’s final statement in line no. 8 that he compares Vibhishan with a ‘saint’ and says that ‘saints like you are very dear to me’. Therefore we may also deduce that ‘saints’ and ‘friends’ are equally dear to Lord Ram, that all saints are friends of Lord Ram whether they are openly declared so or not, that the auspicious, the righteous, the holy and the glorious characters of all saints make them endeared to the Lord as if they were all his friends, and therefore all of them can be assured of the Lord’s unstinted support, protection, care and reciprocal affection even if they expressly request for such blessing from the Lord or not. It also simply means that all saintly people are friends of the Lord, and therefore the Lord is duty-bound to protect and look for their welfare according to his own self-declared policy.

In his worldly play, the Supreme Being had addressed three persons as his friend—(i) one was Nishad, the chief of the boatman community—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 88; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 151; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193 etc.,

(ii) the second is Sugriv, the chief of the monkey race—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10, 23 that precede Doha no. 7; Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43 etc.;

and (iii) the third is Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 80; Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 Kha etc.

Lord Ram has cited three persons here who know his nature in right earnest—they are Kaagbhusund, Lord Shiva and Parvati.

(a) Kaagbhusund was well-steeped in devotion for Lord Ram and his spiritual enlightenment and level of wisdom was of such a high standard that Lord Shiva had selected him to preach Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, when the latter wished to learn about the true nature of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 85.

The entire episode is narrated in full as the second half of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas, extending from Doha no.54 right upto to the end of the holy book in Doha no. 125.

(b) Lord Shiva is the main narrator of this divine and holy story of Lord Ram; it was conceived in his heart and mind when he was meditating upon the holy form and name of Lord Ram. Shiva had revealed it first to his divine consort Parvati or Uma, and therefore, like

Kaagbhusund, she was the only one who had a first hand knowledge of this divine story and its secrets. It was on her request that Shiva had told this story in the first instance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 30; Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 127, till Doha no. 129.

Tulsidas has clearly said that the story he is narrating is none of his own creation; it is the same story that was narrated by Lord Shiva to Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 130.]

जौं नर होइ चराचर द्रोही । आवै सभय सरन तकि मोही ॥ २ ॥

तजि मद मोह कपट छल नाना । करउँ सद्य तेहि साधु समाना ॥ ३ ॥

jauri nara hō'i carācara drōhī. āvai sabhaya sarana taki mōhī. 2.

taji mada mōha kapaṭa chala nānā. kara'um' sadya tēhi sādhu samānā. 3.

Even if a person is considered inimical towards the whole world which consists of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, even if he has created animosity all around himself, but still if, stricken with terror and overcome with mortal fear, comes to me to seek refuge in my holy feet (2) after having abandoned or discarding all Mada (ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness), Moha (delusions, attractions, infatuations and attachments), Kapat and Chal (deceit, conceit, pretensions, wickedness, trickery)—then I verily say I transform him into a saintly figure (3). (2-3)

[Note—It must be noted that the Lord first converts him into a 'saintly figure' before accepting him. Or we can say that as soon as the person coming to seek Lord's grace has this thought in his mind that he will go and surrender before the Lord by throwing off his dirty cloak symbolised by these negative traits as Mada, Moha, Kapat and Chal, he has automatically converted himself into a saintly person—which implies that his Atma, his 'true self' has shed its baggage of worldly taints and emerged fresh and cleaned in its original form. It is this pristine form of the Jiva, the living being, which is eligible to attain the Lord. This process of conversion from a tainted Jiva to a holy and saintly Jiva is as automatic and natural as the chasing away of the darkness of night with the arrival of dawn.

When we read elsewhere in the preaching of Lord Ram in relation with the virtues of saints we find that the taints that are listed here in line no. 3 are the first signs that are to be eliminated from the mental horizon of anyone if he ever hopes to be classified as a saint and pious person.

Earlier, Vibhishan had unilaterally declared this virtue of Lord Ram, that the Lord does not turn away even if a person is so sinful as to have made the whole world his enemy due to his misdeeds, when he was advising his brother Ravana to surrender before the Lord, return Sita to him and avoid unnecessary confrontation with the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 39.]

जननी जनक बंधु सुत दारा । तनु धनु भवन सुहृद परिवारा ॥ ४ ॥

सब कै ममता ताग बटोरी । मम पद मनहि बाँध बरि डोरी ॥ ५ ॥

jananī janaka bandhu suta dārā. tanu dhanu bhavana suhrda parivārā. 4.

saba kai mamatā tāga baṭōrī. mama pada manahi bām̐dha bari ḍōrī. 5.

[Now, Lord Ram goes on to describe the glorious virtues of saints which make them dear to him—]

Mother, father, brother, son, wife, body, wealth, home, friends, compatriots and other kith and kin, as well as the family (4)—a person who breaks off all his attachments and infatuations with them, who binds them all in a single rope of dispassion and detachment (i.e. who turns his mind away from them; who is no longer infatuated with them or think of them), and instead tie his Mana (i.e. his heart, mind and sub-conscious) in my holy feet (5)—(4-5)

समदरसी इच्छा कछु नाहीं । हरष सोक भय नहिं मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

samadarasī icchā kachu nāhīm. haraṣa sōka bhaya nahīm mana māhīm. 6.

—Who has developed exemplary equanimity and evenness of mind and views, who treats all equally and without any bias, who has no desires, hopes, aspirations and yearnings of any kind, who neither feels excited and elated nor sorrowful and depressed (simply because he practices renunciation, detachment, dispassion, self-restraint and equanimity of the highest degree), who has no fear of any kind (because he has surrendered himself to me who am the supreme Protector, and therefore he has faith that no harm can come to him from any quarter)—(6)

अस सज्जन मम उर बस कैसें । लोभी हृदयँ बसइ धनु जैसे ॥ ७ ॥

asa sajjana mama ura basa kaisēm. lōbhī hṛdayam̐ basa'i dhanu jaisēm. 7.

—Verily I say that such a gentleman finds a place in my heart like worldly wealth has in the heart of a greedy man! (7)

[Note—A wise person is one who has broken off all his attachments with these worldly entities as these relationships are temporary and unsustainable. They act like fetters for the Atma, tying it down to the gross world that revolves around and recognizes relationships that treat the gross body of the creature as his true identity instead of the Atma. The problem in this sort of relationship is that the very basis of it is gross and temporary—because both the world as well as the body of the creature are mortal and perishable. Such relationships are bound to break one day, and this will lead to the agony of separation. Besides this, such relationships act as a deep bog, ensnaring the creature for generations after generations.

The only way out of this dilemma and quandary is to recognize that the Atma is one's truthful self, and that Lord Ram is the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is the truthful kith and kin of the individual Atma. The Lord is the real and truthful Father of all the living beings, their true friend and companion. The Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma who is the cosmic supreme Consciousness. This entity is eternal and imperishable—and therefore any relationship that is established between the two, i.e. between the Atma of the individual creature and the Parmatma, will have an eternal and sustainable dimension to it.

A greedy person thinks of nothing but money and wealth; he will go to any extent in acquiring it and protecting it; he is virtually infatuated with it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, stanza no. 1 of Doha no. 130 Kha.

Likewise, Lord Ram is always on the look-out for such persons who have saintly qualities in them, and then goes all out to welcome them and afford all his protection and benevolence to them.]

तुम्ह सारिखे संत प्रिय मोरें । धरउँ देह नहिं आन निहोरें ॥ ८ ॥

tumha sārīkhē santa priya mōrēm. dhara'um' dēha nahim āna nihōrēm. 8.

Saintly persons and pure souls like you are very dear to me. It is for them that I (Lord Vishnu) have assumed a form of a human being (as Lord Ram). (8)

[Note—This line clearly establishes that the Supreme Being has come down to earth for the benefit of saints and saintly people.

Lord Ram has taught Sabari about the nine virtues that a devotee of the Lord must possess in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36. Then again, Lord Ram has told Kaagbhusund that if a creature has devotion for him and has abandoned all deceit, conceit, pretensions and tricks, then even if his most lowly the Lord accept him willingly—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 85, till Doha no. 86.

A remarkable thing emerges if we have a close look at all the characters in the story whom Lord Ram addresses as 'friends' or 'saints' or 'devotees' whom he has cheerfully accepted in his fold. All of them are of low birth and are sinful by their bodies. (i) Nishad is a boatman who eats fish as a staple diet. (ii) Sabari is of a low caste. (iii) Sugriv is a monkey by birth, and so is (iv) Hanuman whom the Lord heaps praises with, going to the extent of saying that he will never be able to repay his debts (Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32). (v) Vibhishan is born in the demon race. And (vi) Kaagbhusund is a crow.

This list highlights that the Lord has come down to earth to give redemption to the fallen and provide salvation to the humblest and the meekest. A healthy person does not need the care of an expert doctor or nurse; it is the sick who need it. The Lord is that spiritual doctor and nurse!]

दो०. सगुन उपासक परहित निरत नीति दृढ़ नेम ।

ते नर प्राण समान मम जिन्ह कें द्विज पद प्रेम ॥ ४८ ॥

dōhā.

saguna upāsaka parahita nirata nīti dṛṛha nēma.

tē nara prāna samāna mama jinha kēm dvija pada prēma. 48.

Those who worship my (i.e. the Supreme Being's) Saguna form (i.e. form that is visible and has attributes) {that is, those who worship Lord Ram as being an incarnation of the Supreme Being}¹, those who remain engaged in the welfare of others (instead of causing them pain and miseries)², those who are steady in observing sacraments and other religious duties along with being diligent in following the path of righteousness, propriety, morality and ethical conduct inspite of all provocations and temptations³, and those who have affection (respect) for the holy feet of Dwijs (Brahmins; elderly and learned people)⁴—verily I say that such people are as dear to me as my own life. (Doha no. 48)

[Note—¹The difference between the Saguna form of the Lord and his Nirguna form (one without any specific attributes; the cosmic invisible and all-incorporating form) have been elucidated in detail by Lord Ram to preach Bharat, Hanuman and the rest in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 41.

²The virtue of striving for the welfare of others is lauded elsewhere also—for instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 121 it is asserted that “the natural character of saints is that they endeavour or strive to do good of others and care for their welfare by employing their mind, heart and words to the best of their abilities; suffering for the good, happiness and welfare of others is a character of saints, while being the cause of pain, misery and unhappiness of others is an innate nature of non-saints.” This is the principle of a saint taught by Kaagbhusund to Garud.

³To be steadfast in following the correct path inspite of all provocations is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 46 (Lord Ram teaches Narad); Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram teaches Bharat and others); and Lanka Kand, Doha no. 34 Kha (Angad tells Ravana).

⁴Having respect for Brahmins is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16 (when Lord Ram has preached Laxman); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram taught Bharat and others); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45 (Lord Ram preaches the citizens of Ayodhya).]

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Canto 1.8

Lanka Kand, Doha no. 80 Ka along with Chaupai line nos. 4-11 that precede this Doha in which the Lord has preached Vibhishan about the symbolic chariot riding upon which a man can achieve success and victory even against great odds in life; a chariot that can take a man to his victory and bestow him with acclaim in all spheres of his routine life.

This teaching of Lord Ram describes the glorious virtues that make a man victorious in all his struggles in this mundane world. These virtues are likened to a chariot on which a warrior rides to his victory in the battle-field. The analogy is obvious—the struggles of life in this mundane world are like the battle-field as they consists of innumerable pains and miseries as well as improbables over which one has no control. And just like a strong chariot helps the expert warrior to move swiftly from one corner of the battle-ground to another, issuing instructions to his army and out-manoeuvre the enemy, the grand virtues listed by Lord Ram helps a person overcome all obstacles in life and emerge victorious.

The context is the battle-field of Lanka. Ravana, the demon king, is astride a strong chariot, while Lord Ram is on foot. It becomes physically difficult to manoeuvre and move swiftly on foot and fight against a powerful enemy who is given the advantage of mobility and protection of a vehicle built especially for the battle, such as the war chariot. He can store his arms and ammunition in this chariot besides enjoying the advantage of the ability to have a commanding position from which to control the army spread across the battle-field by the virtue of his fast manoeuvrability and movement.

So, this deficiency made Vibhishan very worried and upset. Though he had immense affection and faith in the Lord, but for once he began to have doubts as how will

the Lord conquer a strong enemy while fighting on foot. It was then that Lord Ram preached these grand and glorious virtues to Vibhishan just like Lord Krishna had taught his friend Arjun in the battle-field of Kurushetra that became famous as Lord Krishna's Geeta.

सुनहु सखा कह कृपानिधाना । जेहिं जय होइ सो स्यंदन आना ॥ ४ ॥

sunahu sakhā kaha kṛpānidhānā. jēhim jaya hō'i sō syandana ānā. 4.

The gracious and merciful Lord Ram said (to Vibhishan)—‘Listen friend! The chariot that leads a man to victory is different (from the physical chariot you are talking about). (4)

[Note—Vibhishan was talking about a war chariot, but Lord Ram used this opportunity to teach him about the principles of obtaining success in all spheres of life and come out victorious from the battle symbolized by the constant miseries and torments that a man faces in this world in his life. The Lord explained to him the grand principles of morality, ethics, righteousness, propriety and probity—in essence, the laws of Dharma that protects a person like body-armour, can be used by him to vanquish all his negative and sinful tendencies as well as the thick layer of faults and blemishes that have accumulated around his Atma due to these sins and demeanours, because they act like a formidable enemy for a man. A physical enemy can at the most harm a person's body which is nevertheless mortal and perishable, but the lack of good virtues are like an internal enemy that kills the prospects of his Atma from finding peace, bliss, tranquility, happiness and liberty.

It is interesting to note that Lord Ram is honoured as being ‘one who is an abode of mercy, kindness and grace’ (‘Kripaanidhaan’—‘Kripaa’ means mercy and kindness; ‘Nidhaan’ means an abode). This is to indicate that the Lord is gracious and kind enough to use this opportunity of removing the doubts of Vibhishan to preach to the world at large something of great value which would be of great help for the rest of the creatures to overcome formidable obstacles that all of them face in their lives in this world to a greater or lesser degree. The principles outlined by the Lord will act as a guide and moral reference manual for all of them to show them the path of victory in life and how to surmount all obstacles and hurdles easily so that victory is obtained by them against all odds.

Another point to note is that Lord Ram addresses Vibhishan as a ‘friend’—implying that he is about to reveal some secrets of success in life to him because Vibhishan is his friend, and therefore a saintly person. Spiritual secrets should be told to a competent person only, for otherwise it is wasteful to tell unworthy people. And being the Lord's friend, Vibhishan must be assured that the Lord will undoubtedly win the war, and that he need not harbour unnecessary worries as these will have a negative impact on morale.]

सौरज धीरज तेहि रथ चाका । सत्य सील दृढ़ ध्वजा पताका ॥ ५ ॥

sauraja dhīraja tēhi ratha cākā. satya sīla dṛṛha dhvajā patākā. 5.

[Lord Ram now describes the various parts that constitute the glorious ‘Chariot of Dharma’. These parts are metaphoric representations of the golden rules of conduct and grand qualities that a person must possess in order to be successful in life and overcome all obstacles that he faces during the course of his life in this tumultuous world. Riding a

symbolic chariot that is made up of these auspicious virtues, any person is sure to obtain victory in the long battle against all odds in this life to emerge victorious and glorious.]

The two noble virtues of 'Sauraj' (valour; bravery) and 'Dhiraj' (courage; patience; resilience; fortitude; forbearance) are the two metaphoric or symbolic wheels of this Chariot (which takes a person to his moral victory and gives him glory and conquest against all odds in life).

The two flags or standards flying on this Chariot are the two virtues of 'Satya' (truthfulness and honesty) and 'Sheel' (good character and conduct; politeness, civility and courteousness; humility, good manners and etiquette). (5)

[Note—As we have by now read, Lord Ram is describing a symbolic 'Chariot of Dharma'. Just like a warrior is able to obtain victory against a formidable enemy if he is provided with a strong war-chariot, any person who rides a Chariot of Dharma is able to conquer the world as well as vanquish all his enemies represented by all the various hurdles that he faces in life to emerge victorious and glorious.

Just like any ordinary chariot, the fabulous Chariot of Dharma also consists of various parts, and all of them are necessary to make the complete Chariot. In other words, a person must inculcate all of them in his life, give all of them equal importance and attention, for even if one fails to reach the required standard the Chariot of Dharma will be weakened to that extent. And then chances of total and comprehensive success in life will be reduced to the extent that any of these virtues are lacking in strength.

Even as any ordinary chariot needs two robust wheels to move, the Chariot of Dharma needs the two primary virtues of 'Sauraj' and 'Dhiraj' to enable the person to ride to his victory. Obviously it is true—for without courage and fortitude, without patience and resilience no one can expect any big and sustainable success in life.

In ancient times, chariots had only two wheels instead of four, whether they were war chariots or civilian chariots. This is endorsed in the first of the four Vedas, i.e. the most ancient one known as the Rik Veda, which describe such chariots—the war chariot is described in its Mandal 6, Sukta (hymn) no. 75, and the civilian chariot in its Mandal 10, Sukta no. 85.

The two virtues of 'Satya' and 'Sheel' make him honourable and respected in society; a person who has these two virtues is shown the highest adoration in this world. Any success that is obtained by pretensions and deceit is dishonorable and contemptible. Then, success should not make a man pride, haughty and arrogant—i.e. he should have 'Sheel' in him inspite of the glories he acquires. This goes on to fortify his conquest—for if he is truthful and trustworthy as well as polite and kind, he is lauded and remembered for generations to come after he is dead and gone. Otherwise he is loathed and despised by all, even by them who praise him out of fear of reprisals.

The flag mounted on the chariot of a king stands for his authority, glory and fame. It is seen from far away even though the chariot is yet not visible. Hence, if a man has Satya and Sheel in his character, then his name and glory spreads to even the world's remotest corner inspite of his never setting foot there in his life. This is tantamount to the conquest of the world—a conquest in which not a single drop of blood is shed. For instance, Lord Buddha's glory and name has spread over the world even though he did not move anywhere, and preached non-violence in deed and words.

During a war, if the standard or flag of the king falls it symbolizes his defeat; the army surrenders or flees as soon as the flag is felled. Similarly, if a man compromises with these two noble virtues of Satya and Sheel, than he is deemed to be as good as being defeated.]

बल बिबेक दम परहित घोरे । छमा कृपा समता रजु जोरे ॥ ६ ॥

bala bibēka dama parahita ghōrē. chamā krpā samatā raju jōrē. 6.

This Chariot of Dharma has four magnificent horses—they are the four noble virtues of ‘Bal’ (strength; power; authority; force; energy; dynamism), ‘Vivek’ (wisdom; discriminatory powers and abilities; intelligence; rationality; discretion), ‘Dam’ (self-restraint; self-control), and ‘Parhita’ (to do good to other; be diligent towards other’s welfare, happiness and well-being; benevolence, graciousness and magnanimity).

The reins or fasteners that tie them together and keep them in order are the three grand virtues of ‘Kshamaa’ (forgiveness), ‘Kripaa’ (mercy; grace; compassion), and ‘Samtaa’ (equanimity; equality; evenness of mind) (6)

[Note—Next important part of a chariot is the horse. The Chariot of Dharma is pulled by these four symbolic horses representing the four glorious virtues as listed above. In other words, one must carry on with his life and its duties energetically and without losing courage and patience (‘Bal’), taking all decisions wisely, intelligently and rationally (‘Vivek’), all the while exercising great self-control over the mind and the sense organs of the body and keeping them under tight leash to prevent them from falling prey to temptations and other traps laid out by the deluding world (‘Dam’), and be mindful about the welfare and well-being of the creature around him so that any of his actions or deeds or words may not harm them in true spirit of non-violence as well as the eclectic philosophy of non-duality whereby one is expected to see the same Supreme Being in each individual living being known as the Jiva (‘Parhita’).

If a man has these four virtues in him, his chariot of life is driven smoothly like a physical chariot in which the horses are well trained and tamed.

Then again, the reins that are used to control the horses are symbolized by the three virtues of forgiveness and tolerance (‘Kshamaa’), compassion, mercy and grace (‘Kripaa’), and equanimity and evenness of mind (‘Samtaa’). A charioteer knows the wisdom of maintaining his cool and poise when riding a chariot—he has to control the horses, keep an eye on the road, skirt dangers such as holes and obstacles on the path, and avoid hurting passers-by. Even if some of the horses act wildly, even if the people met in the way act rudely or make disparaging remarks, the charioteer should not lose his cool and mind, for if he gets angry and loses his composure at provocations he will not be properly able to focus on riding the chariot which would start rocking and ultimately lead to some sort of accident, minor or major.

Therefore, to ensure that the Chariot of Dharma reaches its destination comfortably, the wise person must inculcate these virtues along with other virtues also because any chariot can reach its destination only when it is pulled by horses, and these horses need to be tamed, and properly harnessed and bridled.

The first virtue listed in this line is ‘Bal’ which literally means strength, force, powers and authority that a person possesses. There are said to be seven kinds of Bals—viz. (i) ‘Vairagya Bal’—the stupendous moral and spiritual strength that comes with true renunciation, detachment, dispassion and non-involvement in any thing related to this mundane, deluding and mortal world of sense objects and their allurements; (ii) ‘Shaarirak Bal’—or the strength, stamina, vigour, energy, dynamism, potent, valour and abilities of the physical body, such as the strength of one’s arm and that which comes with a muscular body; (iii) ‘Buddhi Bal’—or the strength of one’s intellect and wisdom; (iv) ‘Tapa Bal’—or the astounding mystical powers that one accesses by doing Tapa, which means austerity, penance and sufferance of hardship for some noble cause which hardens a man from the inside; (v) ‘Yoga Bal’—or the fabulous mystical powers that come to a person by the virtue of his doing Yoga, which means doing meditation in a comprehensive manner as this bestows stupendous powers to its practitioner; (vi) ‘Sainya Bal’—or the power that

comes with a strong army of a kingdom; and (vii) 'Atma Bal'—or the inherent strength that the Atma possesses, which can be translated as self-confidence and grit.

The second virtue is 'Vivek' which literally means wisdom, intelligence, an analytical mind, and the ability to discriminate between the right and the wrong. It also incorporates the ability to have insight and foresight. If a man possesses these virtues then naturally he is able to smoothly overcome all problems of life because he analyses each development and selects the best course of action that will suit his objectives in life. Such a man is never acts in haste and impulse; his actions are well-thought of and planned.

The third virtue is 'Dam' meaning self-restraint and self-control. This is a very important instrument in the hands of a person to by-pass many problems in life that are easily overcome or avoided by merely exercising restraint over one's emotions and body. This virtue helps one to overcome temptations and entanglements with the world of material objects and their multifarious delusions and false charms. 'Dam' helps prevent greed and yearning; it helps get rid of such negativity as jealousy, envy and malice; it fosters peace and contentment of the mind; it prevents the mind to be wayward and instead helps it to be focused on the job at hand.

The fourth virtue is 'Parhita'—or keeping in mind the good and well-being of others. This naturally fosters goodwill and brotherhood; a man who thinks good of others is invariably liked by everyone, and even his opponents fear annoying him as they know that the society will take his side. There is no better principle of Dharma as thinking and doing good of others, and to make others suffer is the worst sin one can commit—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41 wherein Lord Ram has himself endorsed this virtue of 'Parhita' in a person as being the best one.

The next three virtues of 'Kshamaa' (forgiveness), 'Kripaa' (benevolence, grace, mercy and compassion) and 'Samtaa' (equanimity and forbearance; treating everyone and everything alike) go hand in hand. If a person has them, he is elevated to an exalted position in the world that would be no less than that of Lord Ram himself, because the Lord is famous as being an ocean of these three grand and eclectic moral and spiritual virtues.

Usually it is observed that when one becomes powerful and strong, when one acquires authority and fame by observance of the other virtues, then these three virtues become the first casualty. To possess them in addition to the other great virtues mentioned in this line ensures that a man is eligible for getting acclaim and honour that come with being truly successful in life.

An interesting point emerges by reading this verse. It mentions four horses but only three fasteners. The question arises how are the four horses controlled by mere three fasteners? Well, in war-chariots, two horses are bridled in the front row, and just behind them is the pair of the other two horses. The horses in the front row are tied together by two fasteners on either side, while those behind them in the second row need only one fastener as they follow their companions in the front. Another interpretation is that the horses are bridled on the right and the left by two strong fasteners, and a third is used to guide them in the straight direction. A charioteer has three reins in his hands with which he is able to manoeuvre the chariot in any direction he wishes—to the right, to the left and straight ahead. The implication is clear—the Chariot of Dharma must be controlled by observing the three cardinal principles of Kshamaa, Kripaa and Samtaa. Otherwise it will be rocked and go out of control.

Another interesting observation is the placement of the four horses. The first pair of horses is represented by the first two virtues of 'Bal' and 'Vivek'; they are fastened by the first two fasteners of 'Kshamaa' and 'Kripaa'. Behind them are the two horses represented by the other two pair of virtues, viz. 'Dam' (pronounced as 'dum') and 'Parhita', and they are fastened by 'Samtaa'. This sequence is deduced from the way these virtues are mentioned in the verse itself.]

ईस भजनु सारथी सुजाना । बिरति चर्म संतोष कृपाना ॥ ७ ॥

īsa bhajanu sārathī sujānā. birati carma santōṣa kṛpānā. 7.

[Now, after describing the chariot, Lord Ram describes who the charioteer is.]

Worshipping the Lord God and having devotion, affection and adoration for him is the symbolic the clever and expert charioteer of this divine Chariot.

The virtue of ‘Virati’ (Vairagya or renunciation, detachment and dispassion) is the strong shield, and the virtue of ‘Santosh’ (satisfaction; contentment) is like the sword. (7)

[Note—The charioteer is the person who is responsible for guiding the chariot and taking the warrior to his victory in the battle. So, if a person has devotion for Lord God, if he worships the Lord with faith and sincerity, then it is sure that the Lord God would protect him and guide his destiny to victory against all odds and tumult of life. One must offer his security and future in the trustworthy, strong, expert and caring hands of the Lord even as a warrior reposes his in the hands of an expert and wise charioteer.

The fact that when one leaves his destiny and welfare in the hands of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, the latter takes full responsibility for the former is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, 1/39/5 which essentially says that “none of the obstacles of life create any problem for a man on whom Lord Ram looks benevolently”. And the Lord looks mercifully and benevolently and graciously, with special care and attention, on those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord and have deep love, devotion, trust and faith in him, who worship the Lord as their only solace and succour—refer: Ram Charit Manas (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede Doha no. 36 when Lord Ram has preached Sabari; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 43 when Lord Ram preached Narad; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it, Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it, and then Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki has listed the places where Lord Ram should live.

Obviously, when the almighty Lord of creation favours a person and vows to take care of him, no other force will be able to disturb his peace of mind or harm his interests.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained and tamed horses, a strong rein, and an expert charioteer. What is now needed by the warrior is his personal armour and weapon. These are described next—the shield is represented by the virtue of ‘Virati’, and the sword by ‘Santosh’ as narrated in this verse. The shield is used to protect oneself against harm, and the sword is used to cut through the ranks of the attacking enemy.

If one has inculcated the eclectic virtue of detachment and dispassion, then he is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world, as well as the constantly annoying desire of the sense organs of his body seeking self gratification. The virtue of ‘Virati’ helps him to ward off all sorts of delusions and temptations, and the sword of ‘Santosh’ aids him in this endeavour to cut off any remaining residual effects of delusions that may be lurking and manage to sneak in unnoticed to corrupt his mind and sub-conscious.

It happens usually that one is able to turn away from temptations in the first instance, but later on his sub-conscious mind keeps nagging at him to yield ground. We can understand this phenomenon by a simple example. Suppose a man is advised by his doctor to avoid sweets. When a delicious sweetmeat is brought to him in platter full, he may resist the temptation of indulging in it right then and turns his head away, but his sub-conscious will not forget the dish so easily and would keep on nagging at him till the time he surreptitiously binges on the box of the sweet stored in the fridge in the kitchen. Otherwise he wouldn’t be able to sleep peacefully. This is what is meant in this verse. Even if a wise man is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world at the first sight by employing his grand virtue of ‘Virati’, he still needs the sword of ‘Santosh’ to overcome their long-term lingering effects.

A sword cuts on both sides; it is swung right, left and vertical. In other words, with practicing the virtue of Santosh, the spiritual aspirant is able to conquer the three main enemies of his, viz. 'Kaam' (passions and lust; desires and yearnings; greed and rapacity), 'Krodha' (anger that comes when Kaam is not fulfilled or requited), and 'Moha' (attractions, attachments and infatuations that Kaam generates). This observation is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas as follows—(i) Greed dries up contentment; hence to use the latter to cut off the former before it attacks is important: refer—Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 16; (ii) Without Santosh it is not possible to eliminate Kaam: refer—Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90; (iii) One's anger, the desire to use strong language against one's opponent and wreak vengeance upon him continues to increase if one is not satisfied fully and happy that his opponent has been sufficiently humiliated or defeated: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 274.]

दान परसु बुधि सक्ति प्रचंडा । बर बिग्यान कठिन कोदंडा ॥ ८ ॥

dāna parasu budhi sakti pracaṇḍā. bara bigyāna kaṭhina kōdaṇḍā. 8.

The virtue of being charitable, making donations and giving alms liberally, known as 'Daan', is the strong battle-axe.

The 'Buddhi' (sharp intellect and discriminatory powers; the analytical and rational mind) is like the most powerful and potent Shakti (energized arrow; a sharp spear).

And a highly developed 'Vigyan' (deep knowledge of anything; the ability to have insight into anything in order to understand that aspect of it which is subtle and hidden from view) is akin to a strong and robust bow. (8)

[Note—Here we have three powerful weapons—the battle-axe, the arrow or spear, and the bow. The bow is held in the hand; the arrow and the spear are thrown at the enemy; and the battle-axe is used both ways.

'Daan' is one of the four main forms of Dharma as described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 Kha which says—"Dharma has four limbs ('Satya' or truthfulness, 'Dayaa' or mercy, 'Tapa' or austerity, and 'Daan' or giving of alms and making charity), but in Kali-Yug (i.e. in the present era of the 4-era one cycle of creation and destruction) Daan is the main limb of Dharma. One should therefore make charities and give alms to the best of his ability."

In this verse, 'Daan' is described as being equivalent to the battle-axe because it makes even one's enemy as one's friend. Charity and magnanimity makes a man endeared to all, even his opponent is subdued by his attitude. A charitable man is welcomed everywhere, and everyone comes forward to help him should he himself fall on bad times. This noble virtue in any man acts to protect him against all misfortunes that may befall him in life—hence it is likened to an axe. Again, since donations are made and charities are given by the man using his own hand, the simile is apt.

'Buddhi' is used by a wise man to deal with the current situation as well as plan for the future. It is used by a wise man to overcome sticky situations and avoid such eventualities from occurring in the future. Even the greatest of difficulties are overcome with intelligent handling of any situation, while foolishness lands a man in grave trouble unnecessarily. This is metaphorically depicted in the form of an arrow and a spear. The 'arrow' is thrown at the enemy, while the 'spear' is used either by throwing or holding in hand. The reach of the arrow is far longer as compared to the spear. So, 'Buddhi' helps a wise man to overcome difficulties of life in the short as well as the long run.

But Buddhi cannot work alone; it works together with 'Vigyan'. This is the metaphoric 'bow'. Even as one needs a bow to use the arrow, one needs Vigyan to use the Buddhi properly.

In other words, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, deep insight, analytical and discriminatory abilities, the ability to decide what is the correct and right path and what is not, to have insight and foresight, to be conscientious and sensitive, and such other grand virtues of the mind and sub-conscious—all must work in coordination to help a person to reach his goal in life.]

अमल अचल मन त्रोन समाना । सम जम नियम सिलीमुख नाना ॥ ९ ॥

amala acala mana trōna samānā. sama jama niyama silīmukha nānā. 9.

The Mana (mind and heart) that is clean, pure, steady and stable is like the quiver.

The grand virtues of 'Sham' (control of the mind), 'Yam' (self-control and abstinence that leads to quietude and peace of the mind), and 'Niyam' (observance of various religious duties, vows and sacraments) are like the many arrows (in the quiver that the warrior carries and uses). (9)

[Note—A clear and stable mind can think properly. If it is fickle and unsteady, it will make the man fidgety and restless. Steadiness of mind and purity of heart are the essential requirements to be successful in any enterprise, because this makes the entire endeavour righteous and auspicious. In the field of Yoga it is unequivocally stated that the purity of mind and heart are essential for success in it because they help the aspirant to fully concentrate his attention on the subject that he deals with, without wavering and jumping from one subject to another and landing nowhere.]

A warrior carries many types of arrows. Thus, a reference is made here to the various limbs of Yoga which work together to help the practitioner achieve his objective for which he had started doing Yoga in the first place—to find peace, to find spiritual enlightenment and freedom, and to establish oneness between his own 'self' known as the Atma and the cosmic 'Self' known as the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is equivalent to realisation of the Supreme Consciousness.

The Upanishads dealing with the concept of Yoga as well as Patanjali's Yogsutra explain these different limbs of Yoga cited in the present verse. Now let us examine the virtues of Sham, Yam, Niyam etc. in brief.

There are said to be eight steps or branches or limbs or paths of Yoga as follows—Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranyam, Prayahar, Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi.

(1) Yam (pronounced as 'Yum')—broadly meaning self restraint and it covers such virtues as non-violence (Ahinsa), honesty and truthfulness (Stya), abhorring theft (Asteya), abstinence, celibacy and detachment from passions (Brahmacharya), and non-accumulation and non-possession (Aparigraha).

(ii) Niyam—or observance of principles or codes of conduct in a religious pursuit. Such as having good habits and contentment, observing austerities and penances, self-study of scriptures, following a righteous, virtuous and noble way of life etc.

According to Skanda Puran, the 'Yam and Niyam' mentioned above are ten, and they have been described in Skanda Puran in these words:-

The ten 'Yams' are—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyan (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanors and sweet towards all).

The ten 'Niyams' are—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21).

The 10 Yams and 10 Niyams—These have been described in (i) the Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos. 11-14; and (ii) the Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, sections 1-2.

The Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 1 lists the ten Yams and section 2 lists the ten Niyams as follows—

“Canto 1, section 1 = The eight branches of Yoga are the following—Yam (self-control), Niyam (observation of spiritual laws or rules), Aasan (sitting postures), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (restraint of the mind), Dharna (belief), Dhyan (concentration of mind; remembrance) and Samadhi (trance-like state of permanence in Yoga).

Yam and Niyam are of ten types each, Aasans are of eight types, Pranayam has three phases, both Pratyahar and Dharna have five types each, Dhyan is of two types, while Samadhi is of only one type with no variations.

The ten types or aspects of Yam are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (abstinence, continence, celibacy), Daya (mercy), Saralta (simplicity, humility), Kshama (forgiveness), Dhairya (patience), Alpa-ahar (moderation in eating), and Pavitra (purity and cleanliness).

[Now, each of these terms are being defined—] ‘Ahinsa’ means not harming or causing pain to any creature, at any time, and by any means—not by one’s thoughts or involvement of the mind in any way, not by speech or words, not by the body and its actions. [That is, non-violence should be holistic and comprehensive in nature—it is not limited to only avoiding physical cruelty or aggression but also includes mental and verbal aspects.]

‘Satya’ means to tell, honestly, truthfully and with the greatest sincerity one can have, whatever is for the good and true welfare of the other person, whether he likes it or not. This would involve the mind and its thoughts, the speech and the words used to tell the truth, and the body that implements this truth in the shape of deeds done by it and actions taken by it. [That is, Satya involves not telling things simply because they might appear pleasing to the hearer, or said out of some vested interest at stake, but to say things which are genuinely in the interest and long-term good of the other person. Such things might be unpleasant to hear in the beginning and might even cause rebuke or ill-will for the speaker of the truth, but they give the speaker or the advisor great mental and spiritual satisfaction for having spoken the truth without deceit or fear, besides helping to create positive vibrations around him, and ushering in an atmosphere of trust and brotherhood.]

‘Asteya’ broadly means non-stealing, and it includes the idea of keeping one’s self aloof from the wealth of others, of not being attracted towards such assets that do not rightly belong to one’s own self, of eyeing the wealth of others with envy and jealousy, of having a greed for them, yearning for them, and waiting for an opportunity to either harm them or deprive the other person of his possessions, or usurping and grabbing the assets rightfully belonging to others by any crooked or deceitful means one can think of. This neutrality and non-lusting must be genuine and sincere, and should involve one’s mind and its thoughts, one’s speech, as well as one’s body and the deeds done by it or actions taken by it. One should be sincere in not being tempted by the wealth of others, and of course this would involve the mind and the sub-conscious which must be duly trained and cultured. [That is, one must never be envious of other people’s prosperity and acquisitions; one must never allow the mind to ever contemplate of harming these assets or plan to grab them by force or conceit. Similarly, one must never allow the speech to ever utter a word of jealousy and say anything that might harm these assets simply because they belong to others, or create prejudice against the rightful possessor of such assets. One must not allow the body to do anything that would in anyway, directly or indirectly, cause harm to the assets that belong to others. Since the general meaning of the word ‘Asteya’ is ‘non-stealing’ it follows that even mental greed or yearning for something that belongs to others, and imagining how good it would have been if it belonged to me, is as good as the actual stealing of it. When the Upanishads talk about implementation of any principle, they imply a wholesome attitude and a holistic approach

towards it, and not only physical aspect of it such as its literal implementation which is devoid of the spirit of the doctrine. Not physically able to steal anything but be mentally obsessive about it is as good as actually stealing it. In other words, the purity of mind, sub-conscious and intellect are as important as the physical act of abstaining from stealing.]

‘Brahmacharya’ is to abstain from all sexual activities or any kind of indulgences and unrestrained behaviour involving the mind, the speech as well as the physical body and its sense organs under all circumstances. [That is, mere observance of physical celibacy is not enough. One must observe total control over the mind and its faculties so that they are not allowed even to think of any lustful subject or indulge in any inauspicious, unrighteous, unethical, immoral and improper thoughts related to sense gratification or attractions of the material sense objects of the world. One must never think or talk about sensual subjects that arouse passions and disturb the tranquility of the mind. One must never allow the gross organs of the body to be attracted towards objects of self gratification, or of sensual pleasures and comforts. In short, all sensual attractions, all forms of indulgences, all instances of temptations, all examples of self-gratification, and all sorts of unrestrained behaviour of the mind, the speech and the body are covered by the term Brahmacharya. It means total and comprehensive self-restraint or self-control in all spheres of life, and not just of the organs of sensual pleasures.]

‘Daya’ refers to having compassion and mercy towards all the creatures, to be graceful and kind towards all, from the lowly and the humblest to the highest and the exalted.

‘Aarjav’ or ‘Dhairya’ means to have exemplary tolerance, fortitude, courage, forbearance, resilience and patience of mind, to be immensely steady in one’s thoughts and behaviour, to restrict one’s speech and desist from speaking any wrong word against anyone or to anyone, and to keep the body under strict control and not react under any kind of provocation or situation, whether favourable or unfavourable. It implies that a person remains completely neutral and equanimous when faced by favourable and expected circumstances, or by unfavourable and untoward ones.

‘Kshama’ implies to be truly forgiving and un-affected by any offense caused by the other person, to bear with stoic calmness, equanimity, forbearance and a sense of neutrality all sorts of behaviours one has to face from others, whether done inadvertently or purposely, whether such behaviour is favourable or unfavourable, whether it is likable or not. One must be exemplarily calm, unruffled and be forgiving towards others, whether one is praised and honoured by them, or criticized and humiliated by them. One must be sincerely forgiving for any kind of mischief, any kind of misdeed, kind of transgression, any kind of provocative behaviour, any sort of insults, aspersions, asides or insinuations inflicted or cast upon him by other person, directly or indirectly, or by situations created by his adversary that lead to him being subjected to humiliation and insult. Kshama involves remaining unruffled and completely calm, both emotionally as well as sentimentally, under all prevailing situations and under all instigations. One must not harbour any animosity, ill-will, a sense of grievance, a feeling of hatred or a desire for revenge against anyone, or for any deed done by the latter, which has in any way harmed one’s own interest or even has been a cause of annoyance for him. [Therefore we see that Kshama, Daya and Dhairya go hand in hand; one must accompany the other to give meaning to what is being said in this great Upanishad. It has already been emphasized that a wholesome approach is needed when one reads the Upanishad and hopes to benefit from this eclectic and grand philosophy promoted by it.]

‘Dhriti’ is having equanimity, neutrality, fortitude, firmness and steadiness of mind under all circumstances, even when one is subjected to immense emotional turmoil, both of the positive kind such as having happiness and joys, as well as of the negative kind such as being subjected to immense anguish and pain. [That is, one must remain unruffled and maintain one’s poise and calm under opposing situations—such as the one when he suffers from some great financial loss or loses his dear and near ones on the one hand, or when he begets some great fortune or meets his beloved ones unexpectedly on the other hand.]

‘Alpa-ahar’ is to eat with moderation or restraint. It implies eating only so much as to keep one-fourth of the stomach empty. It also implies eating such things that are soothing for the system and non-irritating by nature, things that are invigorating and energizing for the body. Such eatables are foods that are soothing for the digestive system, as well as sweet, pleasant and comforting for the body in general. Some of such eatables are clarified butter (Ghee) of the best quality, unadulterated milk, and other such things.

‘Shauch’ means to be clean and purified both externally as well as internally. While external cleanliness can be done by rubbing the body with clay and washing off the dirt with water, internal cleanliness and purity is achieved by keeping the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect free from all sorts of taints, corruptions and negativities, and instead concentrating their efforts towards auspicious and righteous endeavours such as on spiritualism and attainment of the Truth. [Both sorts of cleaning are necessary. One should keep the physical body clean because it is the residence of the Atma, the pure ‘self’, and if the residence is dirty and filthy it would create a negative environment for the Atma, causing the latter restlessness and having a negative impact on its nature. Further, the body is regarded as the temple of the Lord because this Atma is a miniature form of the cosmic Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being. Just like a man keeps his place of worship, the ‘shrine’, physically clean so as to maintain its sanctity, it is equally important to keep one’s body clean as it is the abode of the ‘personal deity’ known as the Atma. But this body is driven by the mind and its various faculties, and therefore to ensure that the personal shrine of the Atma in the form of the physical body is able to maintain its sanctity and credibility it is imperative to keep the internal apparatus clean and uncorrupt. If the mind and its components are not clean then no matter how clean the external body may be it is of no good to the spiritual aspirant, for sooner rather than latter the body would fall prey to the many temptations of the corrupt world and its attending delusions. Therefore, all efforts of the mind should be diverted away from the falsehoods of the material world of the sense objects and focused on the Atma and the universal truth of the conscious ‘self’.] (1).

“Canto 1, section 2 =The term ‘Niyam’ (literally meaning certain rules and regulations that one is strictly expected to follow in order to be successful in one’s endeavour) applies to the following observances—Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance for some noble and auspicious cause), Santosh (contentedness), Astik (to be a believer), Daan (to give charity and make alms), Ishwar-poojan (worship of God), Siddhanta-srawan (listening to the tenets and doctrines of the scriptures being explained), Hri (shame, prudence, modesty and self-respect), Mati (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindfulness of one’s duties and ethical behaviour), Japa (repetition of Mantras), and Vrat (religious fasting, observing austerity, keeping righteous vows and strict self-control or self-restraint).

[Now, each of these terms would be explained in a holistic way.] The term ‘Tapa’ in the context of Yoga (meditation) is to observe various religious sacraments such as the ‘Krischa Chandrayan¹’ which helps the body to become thin, energized, fit, reactivated and detoxified, as well as shed its unnecessary flab and burden of ailments.

‘Santosh’ means to be satisfied and contented with whatever is available by providence, and never to greed or yearn or wish for more.

‘Aastik’ (believing) implies that one should sincerely believe in what the Vedas have said about religion and other spiritual matters.

‘Daan’ is to give alms to the poor, make donations and charities to the deserving, with due respect to the dignity and self respect of the recipient or the beneficiary, without expecting anything in return. These charities and donations must be made out of the wealth that has been obtained by rightful means, and which rightly belongs to the person who gives such alms, or makes donations or charities. [In other words, if charities are made to humiliate others, to demean their spirits and social standing, to show them that they are underprivileged, unfortunate and inferior to the donor, to create a situation when the other members of the society become lazy,

indolent and unproductive in the expectation of getting largesse without making efforts to meet their requirements by doing deeds, or to show off one's wealth and majesty, or to reap some sort of worldly fame and name as a philanthropic person etc., or if such charities or alms are made out of assets acquired by unlawful and unethical means—then such alms, charities and donations are deemed to be null and void.]

'Ishwar-poojan' is to honour, to offer respectful worship and to pay sincere obeisance to the Supreme Being in his various manifestations, such as Lord Vishnu (the second of the Trinity Gods, the sustainer and protector of creation, and the Lord who had manifested as various incarnations on earth) and Lord Shiva (the third of the Trinity Gods, the concluder of creation and the patron God of ascetics) amongst others. Such worship and honour should be done cheerfully, with great devotion and faith, and by following the proper sanctified method for this purpose as narrated in the scriptures.

'Siddhanta-srawan' is to attentively hear the tenets and doctrines of the Vedas and the Upanishads being explained by those who are well-versed in them, those who are highly erudite and extremely learned in the finer nuances and intricacies of these great scriptures.

'Hri' (shame, modesty, self-respect and dignity) is to feel ashamed at one's own self for doing something that goes against the eclectic doctrines of Dharma (ethics, morality, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and correct thought and action). Therefore, it also entails that one avoids doing anything that is regarded as unholy, lowly, demeaning, degrading and despicable by the Vedas as well as by traditional wisdom and universally accepted convention.

'Mati' (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindful of one's duties and ethical behaviour) is to sincerely wish and have an inborn inclination to follow the tenets of the Vedas. It would include proper training of the mind-intellect apparatus to think and contemplate rightly, correctly and with a positive attitude about the right things and in a right perspective. One should therefore turn away from those things that are demeaning and degrading for the soul, and which undermine the exalted stature of one's divine 'self'.

'Japa' is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one's Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible Japa, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent Japa. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly, and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras silently is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently without even opening the lips is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering the words, and it is multiple times more beneficial.

'Vrat' (observance of religious vows) is to diligently, steadfastly, honestly, consistently and regularly follow the different eclectic principles, the doctrines and the tenets of the Vedas and the Upanishads—to avoid things that are proscribed by them, and do things that are prescribed by them (1).

[¹The word 'Chandrayan' means 'following the phase of the moon', while 'Krischa' means to become thin and lean. Hence, the term Krischa Chandrayan means to make the body thin by strictly restricting the diet according to the established system of doing the Chandrayan Vrat. Hence it involves restricting one's food intake by strictly following the phase of the moon—reducing it gradually during the waning phase of the moon, and increasing it in a step-by-step reverse order in which it was reduced during the waxing phase of the moon.

The Hindu scriptures have prescribed a number of methods of atonement for one's misdeeds and expiations for sins. The Chandrayan is the universal penance for expiation of almost any kind of sin—especially where no specific remedy is prescribed.

It is so-called as during this exercise one follows the phase of the moon in his eating habits. Starting with fifteen morsels of food on the full-moon day it is gradually reduced by one morsel per day till the new-moon day when not a single morsel is eaten by the aspirant. Then from this day onwards, one morsel per day is increased till the full-moon day when once again he eats fifteen morsels. This is one cycle of the penance. It can be repeated as many times as desired according to the intensity of the sin to be atoned for. This penance is also called ‘Pipillikaamadhyā’ or ‘middle of an ant’ exercise because it starts and ends with full fifteen morsels of food with nil food in the middle.

There is a variation of the Chandrayan described above. In the modified version, the penance is started with one morsel on the full-moon day, gradually increased to fifteen morsels on the new-moon day and then progressively reduced by one morsel each day till the full-moon day when once again only one morsel is eaten. This is called ‘Yavamādhyā’ or ‘middle of the wheat grain’—as this grain is thickest at the center and tapers off at the two ends.

In the third variation, eight morsel of food is eaten each day for a month’s time. This is called ‘Yati-Chandrayan’—or the Chandrayan that is prescribed for wandering ascetics who beg for food for sustenance.

The size of the morsel of food is approximately that of a big myrobalan fruit. A person who undertakes the penance called Chandrayan should tonsure the head, do initial fasting as a preparatory step, offer libations of clarified butter (Ghee) and water to the Gods, consecrate the food before eating it, and worship the Moon God.”]

कवच अभेद बिप्र गुर पूजा । एहि सम बिजय उपाय न दूजा ॥ १० ॥

kavaca abhēda bipra gura pūjā. ēhi sama bijaya upāya na dūjā. 10.

The impenetrable body-armour (the ‘Kavach’) is represented by worshipping and having devotion and faith in Vipras (Brahmins; elderly and learned men) and Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide).

Verily, there is no better way to obtain victory in this world; there is no efficacious way than this to attain the glory of conquest. (10)

[Note—The ‘Kavach’ is the closest and the safest thing to protect the warrior. It is usually made of iron either as a plain sheet or as a mesh made of plaited iron chains. It is very sturdy and regarded as the safest protection because it directly protects the body from up close.

Since worshipping Brahmins and paying obeisance to their holy feet is regarded as one of the major auspicious deeds of Dharma (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45), it is likened to a strong Kavach here because the worshipper gets their blessings and grace which protects him against any evil effects of sins and misdeeds.

Lord Ram has himself told the demon Kabandha—“Look, anyone who worships and serves Brahmins, who are like living gods on earth, by his mind, deed, as well as words and speech, without any deceit and pretensions, verily I say that all the Gods, along with the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, as well as myself, become subservient to such a person”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 33.

Once again this virtue is reiterated by Lord Ram to the citizens of Ayodhya when the Lord told them—“Gods and saints are gracious and benevolent upon a person who serves Brahmins without any deceit and pretensions”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 45.

We note here that two types of Kavachs are mentioned here—one is worshipping of the Brahmin, and the other is the Guru. It implies that both of them should be given equal importance in one’s life. Whereas Brahmins act as teachers and moral preceptors for the whole world in a

general way, keeping themselves engaged in studying the scriptures so as to give advice to the world whenever needed, and carrying out religious duties and doing such deeds as needed for the general welfare of the society at large, the Guru is a personal guide and teacher who cares for the individual's spiritual and temporal welfare. So while the Brahmin is a representative of the Supreme Being at the macro level of existence, the Guru represents the same Supreme Being at the micro level of the individual.

Another interpretation is that a wise warrior takes extra precaution by wearing a double-breasted suit of armour—so that even if the outer layer is damaged he still gets protection from the inner layer. In the present context this would mean that even if the Brahmins fail to protect him due to some reason, his Guru will always stand by him. The blessing of Brahmins forms the outer ring of protection, and that of the Guru as the inner ring.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained horses, an expert charioteer, powerful and potent weapons, and personal body armour. Surely then, all the paraphernalia for victory are there, and therefore there is no other better way to win a war and obtain conquest. What one now needs is one's own personal resolve and training, one's own strength, confidence and commitment. In other words, even if every imaginable instrument and mean for personal enlightenment and spiritual elevation are available to a person, even if he has read all the scriptures and is wise enough to understand them correctly and properly, yet if he does not commit himself whole-heartedly towards his spiritual path of obtaining liberation and deliverance, none of them will provide emancipation and salvation to him automatically. A wise man is he who uses all the available resources most judiciously and properly to reach his desired goal in life.]

सखा धर्ममय अस रथ जाकें । जीतन कहँ न कतहुँ रिपु ताकें ॥ ११ ॥

sakhā dharmamaya asa ratha jākēm. jīтана kahaṁ na katahum ripu tākēm. 11.

My friend, anyone who has the kind of 'Chariot of Dharma' which I've described to you above, becomes invincible in this world; no enemy can ever defeat and conquer him. (11)

[Note—The 'chariot' described by Lord Ram is not a physical one, but a metaphoric and symbolic one that stands for the glorious and auspicious virtues a person must inculcate in himself, grand virtues that he must seek and acquire for himself in order to be successful in life even against the most formidable of odds that might seem daunting on their face like a strong and powerful enemy, but they buckle when faced by a man who possesses these magnificent qualities like the enemy crumbling when it faces a stronger warrior.

Lord Ram has described a 'Chariot of Dharma'—that is, a vehicle that can help a spiritual aspirant attain his goals in spite of all the daunting and thorny problems of the world in which he lives. By following the principles of Dharma outlined above, he is rest assured of liberation and deliverance from all fetters and bondages that tie his Atma, his 'pure self', to this mundane world and makes it go round and round in an endless cycle of birth and death along with their accompanying horrors and miseries. Not only this, the journey through life becomes easy and smooth because the aspirant has the security and safety of the Chariot, and the protection of the umbrella of Dharma.

Lord Ram has listed the following twenty-one auspicious virtues that a man must possess if he wishes that the Lord extends him his protection, and if he wishes to become invincible against all the evil effects of this world. The sequential order of the virtues is as follows—Sauraj, Dhiraj, Satya, Sheel (line no. 5), Bal, Vivek, Dam, Parhit, Kshamaa, Kripaa, Samtaa (line no. 6), Bhajan (devotion for Lord God), Virati, Santosh (line no. 7), Daan, Buddhi, Vigyan (line no. 8),

Amal (purity) and Achal (steady) Mana (mind), Sama, Yam, Niyam (line no. 9), and worship of Brahmins and Guru (line no. 10).

Now, it will be very pertinent and interesting to examine the presence of all these magnificent and divine virtues in Lord Ram himself as depicted at different places in different contexts spread through the text of epic Ram Charit Manas, which made the Lord invincible.

Virtue no. 1= 'Sauraj' (bravery and valour)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25 where Marich tells Ravana that it is very unwise to make Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman enemies because they are very brave, powerful and strong, and any opposition to them would be futile.

Virtue no. 2, 3 and 18 = 'Dhiraj' (patience, fortitude, courage and resilience), Satya and mind that is steady, firm and resolute respectively—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 where king Dasrath tells his minister to go behind Lord Ram, after he has been sent to forest exile, and try to purusade the Lord to come back. During this instruction, Dasrath says—"If the two brothers, Ram and Laxman, who are of a firm resolve and an unwavering mind, courageously refuse to come back because Lord Ram is extremely firm in his resolve and is true to his word (that he will go to the forest if it the father's will)---".

Virtue no. 3= 'Satya' (truthfulness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 264 in which the assembly felt glad upon hearing Lord Ram make a firm resolve to honour Bharat's wish—because the Lord is exemplarily truthful to his words, and once he says that he will honour the wish of Bharat he will do it no matter what comes. The context is Bharat's plea to the Lord to return to the city of Ayodhya to ascend its throne, and the Lord agreeing to do what Bharat says because he knew that Bharat cannot tell him to do anything that goes against the tenets of Dharma.

Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 292, the Lord has been ascribed with the virtues of Satya, Dharma, and Sheel.

In Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 23 that precedes Doha no. 7 Lord Ram has himself proclaimed to Sugriv that "listen friend, my words do no go in vain; I do not lie".

Virtue no. 4 = 'Sheel' (politeness, courteousness, civility, humility, good manners and etiquette)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 243 where Lord Ram has eagerly gone forward to welcome his guru sage Vasistha when the party of Bharat arrived at the Lord's hermitage in Chitrakoot to persuade the Lord to come back to Ayodhya. Here Lord Ram has been described as being an ocean of Sheel. (ii) Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 29 Ka, it is said that "Tulsidas declares and asserts that there is no other Lord compared to Lord Ram in as far as the virtue of Sheel is concerned because Lord Ram is an abode, or a treasure-trove, of this grand virtue". (iii) In Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 6 it is asserted that Lord Ram is an abode of Sheel and other auspicious Gunas (virtues).

Virtue no. 5= 'Bal' (strength)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 2 wherein Jayant, the stupid son of Indra (the king of gods), has accepted that Lord Ram possesses unmatched strength, power, authority and potent about which he had not known earlier, for then he would not have had the temerity to hurt Sita. He regretted sincerely, and the merciful Lord forgave him and spared his life.

Virtue no. 6= 'Vivek' (wisdom)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 97 in which Sita says that Lord Ram is most merciful and full of wisdom. (ii) In Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254, sage Vasistha declares to the assembly "no one knows the essential principles and the tenets as well as the practical implementation of the grand virtues of Niti (laws of conduct and thought; laws of jurisprudence), Priti (love, affection, cordiality), Parmaarath (spiritual welfare; general good in the long run) and Swaarath (personal safety and interests) more than Lord Ram. (iii) Then again,

in Lanka Kand, the 2nd half of Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 111, the creator has said while praying to Lord Ram that the Lord is free from anger and is always an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment.

Virtue no. 7 = 'Dam' (self restraint over one's organs and urges)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 179 in which it is asserted that "Lord Ram is pure in mind and heart, that he is pious, and that he is disinterested in and dry (non-emotional) towards the sense objects of the world and their allurements or temptations". (ii) Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32, king Dasrath declares to Kaikeyi (his wife) that "everyone says that Lord Ram is like a Sadhu (saintly and pious)".

Virtue no. 8 = 'Parhita' (welfare of others)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 192 that says that Lord Vishnu took birth as a human being (in the form of Lord Ram) for the interest, welfare, well-being and good of Brahmins, mother Earth, Gods and Saints. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 says "Lord Ram has taken birth for the general good, well-being and welfare of the world at large".

Virtue no. 9 = 'Kshamaa' (forgiveness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285 wherein sage Parashuram has declared that Lord Ram and his brother Laxman are like a temple (abode) of the virtue of forgiveness. (2) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218 in which the creator Brahma has advised the Gods not to creative mischief and put an obstacle in the path of Bharat's attempt to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya because though "Lord Ram does not get angry at any harm or offence caused to him personally or directly", but will not accept any mischief being created to annoy his devotees.

Virtue no. 10 = 'Kripaa' (compassion, grace, benevolence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259 that says Lord Ram is an 'abode of Kripaa'; (ii) Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 208 Kha which says that Lord Ram is an 'ocean of Kripaa'; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 101 that also endorses this virtue of Lord Ram as being an 'ocean of Kripaa'; (iv) Aranya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 2 that says 'there is no one comparable to Lord in having in him the virtue of Kripaa'; (v) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33 that says "Lord Ram has a very sweet temperament, is most merciful, compassionate and gracious, and shows his benevolence dispassionately, without any sort of interests involved"; (vi) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that say—"When Lord Ram was told that the heap of bones lying on the ground was of the sages and seers who have been devoured by the demons, his eyes were filled with tears. He raised his arms and took a firm vow that he will eliminate all the demons from the surface of the earth. After that, the Lord went to the hermitages of all the sages and seers independently to comfort them and give them happiness and plesure."

Virtue no. 11 = 'Samtaa' (equanimity, fortitude, evenness of mind, to treat all alike without distinction and discrimination)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Kishkindha Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 7 in which Baali, the king of the monkey race and elder brother of Sugriv tells his wife Tara that "Lord Ram treats everyone alike and harbours no personal ill-will against anyone". (ii) Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 227 in which Laxman has said "Oh Lord, you have equal love and compassion for all, and treat everyone like you would treat your own self". (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219 which asserts Lord Ram has equanimity and evenness of mind as he treats everyone alike without any distinction and discrimination, and therefore has no ill-will against anyone nor is infatuated with someone else". (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 34 that precedes Doha no. 86 in which Lord Ram has himself declared that "all the creatures are dear to me equally as all of them are my off-springs, all have been created by me—i.e. I do not distinguish between them on any pretext".

Virtue no. 12 = 'Devotion for Lord God and worshipping him' (Ish Bhajan)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) In Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2, till Chaupai

line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3 it is narrated that Lord Ram had installed an image of Lord Shiva, known as a lingam, and then duly worshipped it. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237 that says Lord Ram did his sacraments in the sanctioned way. (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 237 says that the Lord brought flowers so that sage Vishwamitra can offer his ritualistic worship of Gods. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103 says that Lord Ram worshipped an image of Lord Shiva on the banks of the holy river Ganges on his way to the forest after taking a purification bath in the river.

Virtue no. 13 = 'Virati' (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, non-involvement with anything related to the world and its gross objects of the senses)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31 which says "Lord Ram had no greed for the kingdom of Ayodhya; he never yearned for it"; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 51 that says "Lord Ram's mind is like a free elephant, and the responsibilities of the kingdom is like the iron shackle that is put around this elephant's leg to tie it down; so as soon as the Lord learnt that he has been ordered to go to the forest he felt as this shackle has been broken and so he felt exceedingly glad and happy"; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 that says "Lord Ram discarded the royal ornaments and clothes as soon as he received the father's orders to proceed to the forest, and most cheerfully and willingly took up and wore clothes made of bark of the birch tree and leaves with complete dispassion, without having any sort of emotions either of happiness or of dismay in his heart".

The same idea is emphasized in Kavitali of Tulsidas, in its Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 2, line no. 4 which says "The lotus-eyed Lord Ram went to the forest after abandoning the kingdom of his father like a mendicant who has no attachment with anything at all, and who does not look back at the place which he leaves"

Virtue no. 14 = 'Santosh' (contentment; satisfaction at whatever is available)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 342 says "Lord Ram, who is always fulfilled and contented, became satisfied by the words of King Janak". (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 133 that says that Lord Ram's mind and heart felt fully contented when he saw the natural beauty of Chitrakoot.

Virtue no. 15 = 'Daan' (making charity)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 148 in which Lord Vishnu has told Manu and Satrupaa that they are free to ask for anything they want as the Lord is a great giver who gives liberally. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196 says that king Dasrath gave charity with an open hand at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers. Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 Kha says "the wealth that Lord Shiva had granted to the 10-headed Ravana when the latter offered his heads to him as sacrifice, the same wealth was granted hesitatingly by Lord Ram to Vibhishan (even without the latter making any sacrifice like Ravana)". The fact that Lord Ram was 'hesitant' in giving Vibhishan all this is that the Lord felt that it was not enough, and that he should have given Vibhishan much more than that. In other words, Lord Ram is a most magnanimous and benevolent giver; he always thinks that he has not done enough for his devotees and should have done more. (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12 says that when Lord Ram was crowned the king of Ayodhya after his return to the city, liberal donations were made to Brahmins. (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24 says that after becoming the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram used to make liberal charities to Brahmins in many ways.

Virtue no. 16 = 'Buddhi' (intelligence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56 that says "Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial serpent with a thousand hoods) is unable to recount the splendid glories, the matchless strength and immensity of intelligence and wisdom (Buddhi) of Lord Ram even though he has a thousand mouths (hoods)".

Virtue no. 17 = 'Vigyan' (analytical abilities; deep insight and foresight; higher levels of intelligence; transcendental intelligence and wisdom)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72 that says "Lord Ram is such an expert that he knows how to act in different circumstances like an expert artist who can assume so many different postures according to the

role he is assigned on the stage of the theatre”. No one can say that the person playing out a particular part on the stage is not the same person in practical life, so expertly does the artist play out his role. This is because he knows the secrets of the trade, has a first-hand knowledge of the character that he plays on stage, and is so well-versed with the actual situation in the real life that his depiction of the character becomes extremely natural and convincing as if it is the real thing. Similarly, Lord Ram is so wise and expert that he knows the subtle secrets and even those aspects of a thing that are not apparent and known to all.

Virtue no. 18 = ‘Mana (mind, sub-conscious and heart) that is un-corrupt, holy, pious and steady’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 231 that say—“It is natural for the members of the Raghu dynasty (in which Lord Ram took birth, and therefore had this wonderful character in him) that they do not step on a path that is unrighteous, inauspicious, improper, immoral and unethical. I have a firm belief and faith in my (Lord Ram’s) Mana that it has never thought of coveting any woman to whom one is not related.” (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92 that says “Lord Ram is as steady and unmoving as the mountain covered by snow (i.e. the Himalayas), and is as grave, dense and deep as the vast ocean”.

Virtue nos. 19 and 20 = ‘Sham’ and ‘Yam’ (self-restraint of the sense organs and their natural urges for gratification), ‘Niyam’ (following rules strictly, and obeying religious sacraments and observances)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, the 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 says “Lord Ram was true to the vows he had taken, and was steady on his chosen path”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29 says “Lord Ram lived like a true hermit, having completely renounced all his attachments for everything and being fully disinterested in any material thing of the world and its charms”—that is, the Lord practiced a high degree of self control; he shunned all desires for pleasure and comfort inspite of the fact that he was born a prince and would one day ascend the throne of Ayodhya which was regarded as the most prosperous kingdom of the time. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 says that “Lord Ram wore clothes made of the bark of the birch tree and leaves (like a renunciate hermit inspite of his being entitled to royal ornaments and attire befitting a king)”. (iv) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 211 says that—“Lord Ram wore the minimum of clothes, ate naturally grown wild fruits, and slept on the ground on a bed made of leaves and twigs. He lived under the shade of trees, and suffered from the vagaries of Nature by tolerating with equanimity and stoically snow, heat, rain and storm during the phase of his life in the forest as a hermit, without complaining or having any grudge against anyone.”

And finally Virtue no. 21 = ‘Respect of Guru and Brahmins’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 9 which say that “when Lord Ram heard about the arrival of his Guru (sage Vasistha) at his palace, he came forward to receive him at the door, and bowed his head to the Guru. Then the Lord welcomed him (Guru) by worshipping him comprehensively in a ritualistic manner that consists of sixteen steps. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 79 says that “Lord Ram paid his respects to and worshipped the feet of Brahmins and his Guru (sage Vasistha), and then went on his way to the forest”. (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90 where it is said that “Lord Ram (mentally) bowed his head before the lotus-like feet of Brahmins as he strode ahead on the chariot (that was sent by the Gods, to face the enemy in the battle-field of Lanka)”.]

दो०. महा अजय संसार रिपु जीति सकइ सो बीर ।

जाकेँ अस रथ होइ दृढ़ सुनहु सखा मतिधीर ॥ ८० (क) ॥

dōhā.

mahā ajaya sansāra ripu jīti saka'i sō bīra.
jākēṁ asa ratha hō'i dr̥ṛha sunahu sakhā matidhīra. 80 (a).

Listen oh friend (Vibhishan) who has a steady and resolute mind! A warrior (living being) who has a sturdy Chariot (magnificent virtues) as described above becomes invincible for any enemy in this world; he cannot be defeated even if the whole world becomes his enemy; his detractors cannot cause his downfall even if they join hands against him.' (Doha no. 80 Ka.)

[Note—In the beginning of this discourse by Lord Ram, Vibhishan was uneasy and full of doubts—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 6/80/1. He was wary of the prospects of fighting a strong enemy like Ravana without a war chariot and other paraphernalia of battle. It becomes virtually impossible to acquire maneuverability and swiftness of movement, so essential for victory on the battle-field, while fighting on foot. But when Lord Ram taught him the principles of Dharma, when he was enlightened about the subtle inner strength of the Atma that comes to a man by the possession of the divine virtues listed by Lord Ram herein above, Vibhishan became assured of the Lord's victory. This is because he knew that Ravana lacked all of them, and therefore stood no chance against Lord Ram who had all these glorious virtues in him that made the Lord spiritually and morally strong and invincible.

The Lord has said here that a person who possesses this Chariot cannot be defeated by the 'whole world', implying that Ravana, being an individual person, holds no chance when the whole world united against a person who possesses such a fabulous and glorious Chariot of Dharma cannot defeat him.

It is interesting to note that the metaphor of the chariot has been used in the Upanishads also to describe metaphysical principles. Refer: (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-4; (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Katho-panishad, 1/3/3-4, and (iii) Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse 2-3.]

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Canto 1.9

Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 42 in which the Lord has preached Bharat, his younger brother.

After Lord Ram returned and was crowned the king-emperor of Ayodhya, all the gods and sages had assembled to pay their obeisance to the Lord. The celebrations lasted for a long time, but finally they all went to their respective places.

Once it so happened that the Lord was sitting comfortably in a relaxed mood, and then his brothers and Hanuman, his trusted monkey devotee from Kishkindha who had a special bond with the Lord, asked him certain questions. It was an excuse by the Lord himself, because Lord Ram is the inspirer of all, so that he can get an opportunity to expound upon the eclectic principles that define who true saints are, and how one distinguishes them from non-saints. In the disguise, the Lord outlined the tenets of Dharma which govern a person's rightful conduct and thought, and which ultimately makes him a perfect human being who is worthy of adoration and respect, and whose

example is followed by others to lead a life that is auspicious, righteous, noble, ethical, pious and holy.

It will be noted that the characters of saints that the Lord enumerated resonate perfectly with those of his devotees, and hence such saints become very dear to Lord Ram. These saints and devotees are the Lord's true friends.

These saints act as flag-bearers of the laws of Dharma (thought and conduct that are righteous, auspicious, noble, proper, ethical, moral, holy and pious), and they act as a steady beacon of light to show the rest of the world how a person can actually lead a noble and pious life in practice inspite of being surrounded by all the vexations, intransigence, misfortunes and vagaries of mundane life in this material world. Inculcating and practicing the grand virtues of saints will make a man perfect, and entitle him to attain the glories and honour that come with having attained an exalted state of existence which is even envied by the Gods, and which is hereby praised by the Supreme Being himself. Its attainment makes a man blissful and contented, externally and internally, and fit for liberation and deliverance from this mortal world of uncountable miseries and torments.

So, when Lord Ram's three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, along with Hanuman and others gathered around the Lord he realised that they wished to ask something that would remove all their misconceptions and doubts, but were hesitating to do so. The Lord himself broke the ice, and took the initiative to motivate them to ask what they wished to know.

अंतरजामी प्रभु सभ जाना । बूझत कहहु काह हनुमाना ॥ ४ ॥

antarajāmī prabhu sabha jānā. būjhata kahahu kāha hanumānā. 4.

Lord Ram, who knows the internal feelings and thoughts of all as he is omniscient and all-knowing, asked Hanuman—‘Well Hanuman, what do you want to ask?’ (4)

जोरि पानि कह तब हनुमंता । सुनहु दीनदयाल भगवंता ॥ ५ ॥

jōri pāni kaha taba hanumantā. sunahu dīnadayāla bhagavantā. 5.

Then Hanuman joined his palms in humility and as a mark of respect, and replied—‘Oh the merciful and gracious Lord, listen. (5)

नाथ भरत कछु पूँछन चहहीं । प्रस्न करत मन सकुचत अहहीं ॥ ६ ॥

nātha bharata kachu pūṁchana cahahīm. prasna karata mana sakucata ahahīm. 6.

Lord, Bharat wishes to ask you some questions. But he is hesitant to do so (because he does not want to disturb you and is uncertain whether you are willing to answer them). [So, please grant him your permission.] (6)

[Note—It is noteworthy here that the Lord has asked Hanuman what he wished to know, instead of directly saying “who amongst you wish to know anything; go ahead and ask me”. This is because Hanuman was his closest follower, aide, server, devotee and friend since his days in the forest and the conquest of Lanka. It was Hanuman whom the Lord had summoned prior to the departure of the search parties sent to find where Sita was, and the Lord had confided in him certain secrets known to no one else so that Hanuman would convince Sita about the authenticity of his identity when he met her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 4/23/9-11; 5/13/10; 5/13; 5/14/1; 5/16/6—5/17/3.

The Lord was very comfortable talking with Hanuman whom Lord Ram had become accustomed to directly issue instructions and talk since their contact in Kishkindha. Any time the Lord needed help, he always thought of Hanuman. For instance—(i) When Laxman was injured in the battle-field of Lanka and the Lord needed help to bring a medicine man, and then to go, search and bring the relevant herb from northern mountains, he thought of no one else but Hanuman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 6/55/7-8; 6/56/1. (ii) After the conquest of the demon army, it was Hanuman who was asked by the Lord to go and inform Sita about the victory—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 6/107/1-2; 6/108/2-4. (iii) When the Lord was near Ayodhya on his return after the victory of Lanka, he had chosen Hanuman to go and inform Bharat and the rest of the citizens about the Lord’s arrival—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 6/121/1-3.

It is matter of practical observation that a person feels free to talk to his personal secretary on many matters which he thinks twice to discuss with others, even his own family members. It is a routine affair in the world that a personal aide has the closest access to a powerful man as compared to even his own kith and kin. This applied to the relationship between Lord Ram and Hanuman too. The strength of the bondage of affection between the two can be gauged by the fact that Lord Ram has himself openly declared that he will remain ever indebted to Hanuman for the rest of his life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 5/32/5-8 to 5/33/4; 6/62/1.

Hanuman was also extremely close to Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram, so much so that she has declared him to be her ‘son’, an honour no one else was given. Refer:- Ram Charit Manas, 5/16/6, 5/17/3, and 6/107.

There was another very vital reason that should not be overlooked. The Lord must have felt that the rest of his kith and kin were skeptical over the Lord’s dependence on Hanuman and harboured doubts as to the level of intelligence, knowledge and wisdom that Hanuman possessed that made the Lord prefer him over others. Lord Ram wished to remove this doubt—and he used this opportunity to do so. When he asked Hanuman what was that he wished to know, Hanuman would have normally replied that he wanted such and such thing clarified. But no, Hanuman had no doubts about anything as he was the wisest individual in existence. The scriptures have unanimously extolled his wisdom, level of realisation and enlightenment by saying that he stands first in the ranks of such individuals. Therefore, Hanuman did not ask any question himself—as he had nothing to ask in the first place! Only those who do not know ask questions; those who know everything first hand do not. That is why Hanuman says that ‘Bharat wished to know certain things’.

Now therefore we see why Lord Ram had preferred to ask Hanuman instead of any of the others present there—the Lord wished to give the signal that no one should be misled by Hanuman’s physical appearance of a monkey, for he was enlightenment personified. And besides this, the Lord also signaled that Hanuman is the only one who has the guts to face and talk with the Supreme Being directly when even his other closest followers could not gather courage to do it.]

तुम्ह जानहु कपि मोर सुभाऊ । भरतहि मोहि कछु अंतर काऊ ॥ ७ ॥

tumha jānahu kapi mōra subhā'ū. bharatahi mōhi kachu antara kā'ū. 7.

Lord Ram replied—‘Listen Kapi (monkey; Hanuman)! You are aware of my nature—that there is no difference between me and Bharat. [In other words, I hold Bharat very dear to my heart. So he should not fear or have any kind of hesitation in asking me anything. There is no need of an intermediary. I will never take offence at anything Bharat says to me.]’ (7)

[Note—Now, the Lord is a great diplomat and statesman par excellence. He thought to himself—‘Well, Bharat has suffered so much for me while I was in the forest exile, he had forsaken the right to the throne just for my sake. It is out of etiquette and decorum that he prefers to not directly face me as he is not sure whether I am in the mood to reply questions, and would get annoyed instead. So he preferred to prod Hanuman to open the conversation. I must not give a wrong signal to Bharat that I would have got annoyed if he had asked anything directly, assuming that Bharat is trying to test my knowledge.’

So the Lord told Hanuman that Bharat is very dear to him. There was no reason why Bharat should feel reluctant to ask him anything he wished, even if the question is unconventional and odd because it is sure that he (Lord Ram) would never take offence at whatever Bharat says.

There are numerous instances in Ram Charit Manas where the love and mutual trust between Lord Ram and Bharat has been highlighted. The Lord had even gone to the extent of assuring Bharat that “I (Ram) is willing to do what Bharat says” in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 264.

Lord Ram has greatly lauded Bharat and upheld the latter’s purity of Atma, devotion, noble character and virtuous qualities in express terms, saying that Bharat was an expert in the laws of Dharma, in public relations, in the knowledge of the Vedas and in how devotion for the Lord can be developed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/304/8.

Once again, when Laxman got annoyed at the news of Bharat’s arrival at Chitrakoot, it was Lord Ram who calmed him down, and on that occasion the Lord had extensively praised Bharat, saying in effect that Bharat is incomparable in the whole creation, and no one is more righteous, noble, virtuous, pious and holy than him. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, 2/231/1 to 2/233/3.

The glory of Bharat is no ordinary one—Lord Ram knows it but it is so profound and immense in its dimension and intensity that the Lord himself finds it difficult to explain or narrate it fully—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/289/2, 5.

Bharat knew that the Lord loved him more than anyone else because during their childhood days the Lord used to willfully lose the game so that Bharat could win—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/260/6-8 which say “Lord, during our childhood days, you would never find fault in the way I played games with you, and you would voluntarily lose a game so that I felt happy at winning. Then, I have never left your company since my childhood, and you have never made me unhappy by not fulfilling my desires or in anyway doing anything that would ever make me unhappy or sad.”

At this, Lord Ram assured Bharat of his unflinching faith in him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/263/4-8 till 2/264.

Lord Ram had great confidence in Bharat—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/264/7-8 and 2/164 in which the Lord expressly tells Bharat that he has great hesitation in even thinking twice about not keeping Bharat’s wishes, i.e. he is eager to uphold all that Bharat says, especially when their Guru, sage Vashistha has himself endorsed Bharat’s integrity and wisdom.

On his part, Bharat has acknowledged this fact that Lord Ram loves him so much that the latter is ready to go back on his vows and break his words if Bharat so wishes and tells him to do so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/266/8. Wonderful mutual trust and affection indeed.

Bharat knew that Lord Ram always keeps the wishes of his followers and devotees—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219 wherein Brahma, the patriarch of creation, tells Indra, the king of Gods, that “Lord Ram always keeps the wishes of his devotees and followers; the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans, as well as great saints and gods are witness to it”.

Bharat also knew that Lord Ram would never get angry at him; the Lord loved Bharat more than anyone else. This fact has been endorsed at a number of places in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, it is clearly stated in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 234 that “when Bharat recalled the (affable, loving, forgiving, compassionate and merciful) nature of Lord Ram, his steps became very brisk as he moved swiftly to meet the Lord (because he was sure that he will be warmly welcomed by the Lord and not rebuked, scolded and turned away)”. This occasion was Bharat approaching the hermitage of the Lord in Chitrakoot where the latter was living during his forest exile, and Bharat had come to ask for forgiveness and request the Lord to come back to Ayodhya.

Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, 2/241/5 it is asserted that “the ethereal love between Lord Ram and Bharat was of such purity, density and intensity that none of the three Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Vidhi (Brahma), Hari (Vishnu) and Har (Shiva), could ever imagine or dream of it (measure it) in their mind”.]

सुनि प्रभु बचन भरत गहे चरना । सुनहु नाथ प्रनतारति हरना ॥ ८ ॥

sunī prabhu bacana bharata gahē caranā. sunahu nātha pranatāratī haranā. 8.

When Bharat heard these words of the Lord, he fell down and caught hold of the Lord's august feet. He pleaded—‘Listen Lord who eliminates all the sorrows and miseries of those who have taken shelter in your holy feet. (8)

[Note—Bharat felt embarrassed. He fell down at the Lord's feet to pay his obeisance and respect to him, and to convey the message that he is very thankful at the Lord's observation that he loves Bharat dearly.]

दो०. नाथ न मोहि संदेह कछु सपनेहुँ सोक न मोह ।

केवल कृपा तुम्हारिहि कृपानंद संदोह ॥ ३६ ॥

dōhā.

nātha na mōhi sandēha kachu sapanēhum̐ sōka na mōha.
kēvala kṛpā tumhārihi kṛpānanda sandōha. 36.

Lord, I have no doubts, nor do I have any kind of sorrows and delusions even in my dreams. Oh the merciful Lord; it is all because of your benevolence and grace upon me. (Doha no. 36)

[Note—The observations made in note of Chaupai line nos. 6 and 7 are evident here. The Lord had never said that Bharat has these spiritual faults in him. He had merely asked what Hanuman wished to know, and then the latter said that Bharat wished to clarify certain things. No where any mention has been made about who had sorrows or delusions or the like. This clearly shows the reason why Bharat was reluctant to ask the Lord directly—because he thought that as soon as

he says that he wished to ask something, the Lord will immediately deduce that he has doubts and delusions. So Bharat was kind of self-conscious, and he begins to give clarifications about his guilt even without anyone ever questioning his integrity or level of knowledge and wisdom.

Well, if he had no problems, why then did he venture to ask anything at all? The answer to this is that Lord Ram wished to preach or teach the rest of the world some eclectic principles of Dharma, about a holy and pious way of life. So he was the one, being the supreme Inspirer, to inspire Bharat to ask a question that would be of immense benefit for the rest of the world.

Bharat goes on to ask the Lord about the fabulous virtues of saints and holy people, and also those of non-saints and fallen people so that a clear comparison can be made. This will help the creatures of the world at large to differentiate between which virtue to accept and which quality to reject in their own lives. The very fact that all the glorious virtues of saints and pious people that are listed by Lord Ram now were indeed present in Bharat, making the latter a true saint and pious individual is fully and whole heartedly endorsed by sage Bharadwaj as well as the presiding deity of the holy pilgrim place known as Triveni in Ayodhya Kand.

In Ram Charit Manas, 2/205/6-8 and 2/205, the presiding deity of Triveni has praised Bharat and called him a ‘Sadhu’ or a saintly and pious person.

In Ram Charit Manas, 2/205, and 2/30/1, the gods have showered flowers upon him.

In Ram Charit Manas, 2/207 to 2/210/8, sage Bharadwaj has praised Bharat in no uncertain terms. Refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, 2/208/1, 3, 8; 2/210/3-6.

On an earlier occasion, the love between Bharat and Lord Ram has been extolled by sage Bharadwaj in Ram Charit Manas, 2/

Similarly, the sages and hermits who lived in the forest of Chitrakoot have blessed Bharat and were extremely pleased at his devotion for Lord Ram as well as his personal character that was exemplarily pious, holy and virtuous—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/312/4-7.

The whole world had great respect for Bharat—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/326/3, and 2/326.

The wisest king of the time, king Janak, had proclaimed that the deeds of Bharat and his story is spiritually powerful enough to help the creature to break free from the fetters of worldly delusions and attachments as Bharat is a personified form of the eclectic and glorious virtues of devotion, dedication, renunciation and dispassion etc. so much lauded and extolled by the scriptures—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/288/1-3. Bharat is not touched by any kind of delusion, deceit, wickedness etc.—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/288/5; 2/288/5-8.

The glory of Bharat is no ordinary one—Lord Ram knows it but it is so profound and immense in its dimension and intensity that the Lord himself finds it difficult to explain or narrate it fully—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/289/2, 5.

That said, it now becomes absolutely clear that Bharat was speaking the truth when he says that he has no doubts and delusions. And it also shows that Lord Ram himself had no doubt that Bharat had them—for the Lord loved Bharat dearly, and the Lord does not love anyone who is sinful, corrupt, evil and lacks proper virtues as well as wisdom. The Lord is a personified form of eternal knowledge, and knowledge is light; how can the darkness of ignorance and delusions ever be dear to light?

For Bharat, the only relationship and one’s welfare that matters in this world and life was total submission and devotion for Lord Ram—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, 2/178/1 in which he declares “my welfare is in the service of Lord Ram (Sita’s beloved husband—‘Siya-Pati’]”; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, 2/178/7 in which he reasserts the above commitment by saying “let me go to the holy feet of Lord Ram; I see my welfare only in this and nowhere else”.

Earlier, in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, sage Narad has also felt hesitant in asking Lord Ram certain questions when the Lord assured him that he needn’t feel this way as there is nothing in this world that is not possible for the Lord to give his devotees—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 3/42/3-5. Lord Ram told Narad—“Look sage, you are well aware of my nature that I hide

nothing from my faithful devotees, followers and subordinates. Say, there is nothing so dear to me that you cannot ask for it.”]

चौ०. करउँ कृपानिधि एक ढिठाई । मैं सेवक तुम्ह जन सुखदाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

kara'um' kṛpānidhi ēka ḍhiṭhā'ī. mair̥m sēvaka tumha jana sukhadā'ī. 1.

Bharat said—‘Oh an ocean of grace, kindness, mercy and compassion (i.e. Lord Ram)! I excuse myself for being bold and audacious enough to speak in front of you. I gather this courage and temerity because I am your humble follower, and you are the Lord who grants happiness and joy to all your subjects and the living beings in general (‘Jana Sukha-dai’).

[This is the reason why I have gathered enough courage to ask you something about which I surely have no doubt, but I wish that others who do not have this knowledge should benefit from my query. Since you are so gracious that you always ensure that all the creatures of your creation remain happy and contented, you will surely understand my idea and give me an answer that will benefit all the subjects of your creation in general—as you are their supreme Creator, and therefore it is their right to ask you, learn from you and seek guidance from you.] (1)

[Note—Bharat is himself a saintly person, so he hesitates in asking to know about something that he practices himself. It would naturally annoy an ordinary master, but our Lord Ram does not get angry because he is ‘an ocean of grace, kindness, mercy and compassion’—or ‘Kripaa-nidhaan’. The fact that Bharat is a saintly person is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, 2/205/6-8 and 2/205, the presiding deity of Triveni has praised Bharat and called him a ‘Sadhu’ or a saintly and pious person.

In Ram Charit Manas, 2/205, and 2/30/1, the gods have showered flowers upon him.

In Ram Charit Manas, 2/207 to 2/210/8, sage Bharadwaj has praised Bharat in no uncertain terms. Refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, 2/208/1, 3, 8; 2/210/3-6.

So, this is the reason of Bharat’s reluctance in asking Lord Ram about the virtues of saints and saintly persons. But at the same time Bharat gathered enough courage because he knew that Lord Ram never brought in to his heart any faults or demeanours of his followers and subordinates. On an earlier occasion at Chitrakoot, the same situation arose where he had to stand up and request the Lord to abandon his rigid stance of remaining in the forest and instead return to Ayodhya to be crowned its king-emperor. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/299/4.

Bharat knew for certain that Lord Ram never becomes angry at anyone, even against culprits and offenders—refer: In Ram Charit Manas, 2/260/5 which clearly states this fact “I (Bharat) know for certain the nature of the Lord (Ram), that he never gets angry even at offenders, culprits and sinners”.

Sage Vasistha was so impressed by the devotion and high level of spiritualism that Bharat had that he declared in open court at Chitrakoot “In my view, whatever is done keeping in mind the wishes of Bharat, such action or deed will always be auspicious and holy—I say verily that Lord Shiva is witness to the truth of what I am saying”. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, 2/258/7-8; and 2/258.

Well now, if this is the case, how could Lord Ram not keep the wish of Bharat inspite of knowing that Bharat was very wise and there was no need to teach him on any metaphysical, spiritual, devotional, ethical, moral or any other subject of Dharma.

Lord Ram had great confidence in Bharat—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/264/7-8 and 2/164 in which the Lord expressly tells Bharat that he has great hesitation in even thinking twice about not keeping Bharat's wishes, i.e. he is eager to uphold all that Bharat says, especially when their Guru, sage Vasistha has himself endorsed Bharat's integrity and wisdom.

On his part, Bharat has acknowledged this fact that Lord Ram loves him so much that the latter is ready to go back on his vows and break his words if Bharat so wishes and tells him to do so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/266/8.]

संतन्ह कै महिमा रघुराई । बहु बिधि बेद पुरानन्ह गाई ॥ २ ॥

santanha kai mahimā raghurā'ī. bahu bidhi bēda purānanha gā'ī. 2.

Bharat said to Lord Ram, 'Oh merciful Lord! The numerous great and eclectic virtues and divine qualities of 'Sants'—i.e. saints and saintly people, those persons who are virtuous, noble, pious and holy, those whose hearts and mind are pure, those who have risen above the grossness of this mudane world and realized the truth of existence, those who have good virtues as their dominant character, those who are the torch-bearers of the principles laid down in the scriptures, those whose lives are exemplary and worthy of emulation—have been described, enumerated and expounded in a variety of ways in the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (2)

[Note—Lord Ram is addressed as 'Raghu-raai', meaning 'a king of the Raghu dynasty'. The address of a 'king' implies that since you are a king, it is ordained upon you to teach the virtues of goodness to your all your subjects and citizens. That is why the words 'Jana Sukha-dai' have been used to address Lord Ram in Chaupai line no. 1 above. These two words literally mean 'the Lord who gives happiness to his subjects'.]

श्रीमुख तुम्ह पुनि कीन्हि बड़ाई । तिन्ह पर प्रभुहि प्रीति अधिकाई ॥ ३ ॥

śrīmukha tumha puni kīnhi baṛā'ī. tinha para prabhuhi prīti adhikā'ī. 3.

Even you have often praised them, and their auspicious nature and honourable qualities with your own holy mouth¹. You have great affection for them, are favourably inclined towards them, and are especially pleased with them. (3)

[Note—¹The word 'Sri-Mukha' has two parts: 'Sri' meaning one who is honourable and revered, and 'Mukha' meaning the mouth. Hence, this word literally means the mouth of someone who is honourable and revered. The word spoken by such a person is said to be holy and well-respected. Lord Ram is an incarnate Supreme Being, and hence whatever he says is indeed holy and well-respected.

The word '*Sri*' is usually employed as a mark of great respect for those who are wise and respected. It is also a metaphor for wealth as it is one of the many names of goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of material prosperity and wealth. Anyone who teaches is deemed to be a treasury of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and sagacity—noble virtues which are equivalent to worldly treasures. Since Lord Ram is poised to elucidate about the grand virtues of saints, and since these words of wisdom are no less spiritually important than pearls and gems of priceless value, the Lord's mouth from which such words would emerge is compared to 'Sri'—a treasure trove of spiritual wealth!

When Lord Ram begins to teach the glorious virtues and divine characters of saints and those who are pious and spiritually evolved, it will be equivalent to opening of the door of spiritual treasury for everyone to grab by the fistful, 'by the mindful' so to say—because good advice and wisdom is accepted by the mind and not by the physical body, and this treasure is stored in the mind so that it can be retrieved whenever needed by one during the course of his life as a source for guidance and advice.]

सुना चहउँ प्रभु तिन्ह कर लच्छन । कृपासिंधु गुन ग्यान बिचच्छन ॥ ४ ॥

sunā caha'um^ṛ prabhu tinha kara lacchana. kṛpāsindhu guna gyāna bicacchana. 4.

I want to hear about them. Oh kind Lord! You are an ocean of all good virtues and a treasure trove of right knowledge and wisdom. [In other words, you will be able to properly enumerate them for me, and what you say will bear a stamp of authority.] (4)

[Note—The grand and magnificent virtues of 'Sants' (saints) have been expounded in detail at a number of places in the scriptures elsewhere also.

A brief list is as follows—

(a) *Adhyatma Ramayan* of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, canto 3, verse no. 37-39, describes the characteristics of a truly pious and holy person.

(b) Goswami Tulsidas' *Ram Charit Manas*, in the following assorted places—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 5-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 45, till Doha no. 46; (v) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; (vi) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38; (vii) Doha no. 46 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 46.

(c) Goswami Tulsidas' *Vairagya Sandipani*—verse no. 8-33.

(d) In the *Upanishads* also, there are numerous instances when the eclectic qualities and grand auspicious virtues of saintly, holy and pious people are enumerated. Some of the examples are the following—(i) Shatyani Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, verse no. 19, 25; (ii) Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Cantos 1, Section 1-2; (iii) Sanyas Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 1, 55-57, 60; (iv) Jabal Darshan Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 1, verse nos. 4-6; Canto 2, verse no. 1; (v) Kaivalya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 2.]

संत असंत भेद बिलगाई । प्रनतपाल मोहि कहहु बुझाई ॥ ५ ॥

santa asanta bhēda bilagā'ī. pranatapāla mōhi kahahu bujhā'ī. 5.

Oh Lord who cares for those who have taken shelter with thee! Tell me the different virtues, attributes, qualities and nature of saints and non-saints in such a comprehensive way that a clear distinction can be made between the two of them (i.e. between the saints and non-saints), and I can properly understand them without any ambiguity.' (5)

[Note—The last word 'Bujhaai' means to explain things in such a way that the listener fully understands them, and has no ambiguity about them.]

संतन्ह के लच्छन सुनु भ्राता । अगनित श्रुति पुरान बिख्याता ॥ ६ ॥

santanha kē lacchana sunu bhrātā. aganita śruti purāna bikhyātā. 6.

[Then Lord Ram enumerated the grand positive virtues of saints so that not only is the query of Bharat satisfied but such knowledge can also help others to be enlightened about them. The Lord then goes on to describe the negative qualities of non-saints. This helps to bring into focus the difference between the two types of persons: the saints and the non-saints. The contrast between the characters of the two becomes very evident. It helps a person to determine with whom to have relations in life and whom to avoid; or whom to follow as an ideal and whom to neglect in life.]

The Lord said—‘Listen brother. The auspicious and divine virtues of saints are countless (i.e. it is not possible to list them all here, but still I’ll tell you the main ones), and they are famed in the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (6)

[Note—Bharat asked the Lord to tell him the virtues and characteristic qualities of saints and non-saints in a comprehensive manner. The Lord therefore stresses that it will take an independent tome to enumerate all the virtues and glorious characters of them if one were to list all of them and explain all of them exhaustibly. So it will be better to outline only the salient features at present. Bharat must realise this therefore, and should not think that the salient features or important virtues that the Lord was about to narrate to him are all there is to it. There are countless more of them, but if one becomes aware of the important ones he can automatically get an idea of what the rest would be based on common sense. The auspicious virtues enumerated herein now act as the basis or foundation for the rest of the virtues which are not expressly mentioned here as they are more like off-shoots of the primary ones which are enumerated now.]

संत असंतन्हि कै असि करनी । जिमि कुठार चंदन आचरनी ॥ ७ ॥

काटइ परसु मलय सुनु भाई । निज गुन देइ सुगंध बसाई ॥ ८ ॥

santa asantanhi kai asi karanī. jimi kuṭhāra candana ācaranī. 7.

kāṭa’i parasu malaya sunu bhā’ī. nija guna dē’i sugandha basā’ī. 8.

The difference between a saint and a non-saint is like the relationship between an axe and sandalwood. The axe tries to cut and harm the sandalwood tree, but the latter is so kind and gracious that it lends its sweet fragrance to its cutter, the axe. (7-8)

[Note—The axe has the natural habit of cutting trees; to ‘cut’ is the axe’s job; it’s natural to it. It can’t act otherwise. On the other hand, the sandalwood has the natural habit of lending its sweet fragrance to anything that comes in contact with it—it’s its natural habit.

Both of them, the axe and the sandalwood, act according to their natural and inborn temperament and instincts. The merciless axe always harms the sandalwood tree by cruelly cutting it into pieces, while the sandalwood is so forgiving, tolerant and graceful that instead of cursing the axe and vowing vengeance against it, it lends its sweet fragrance to the latter as a token of a welcome gift.

Likewise, true saints are always forgiving, tolerant, calm, understanding, merciful and gracious, spreading their goodness all around them like the sandalwood that spreads its fragrance wherever it is present. On the other hand, the non-saint is a cause of torments and miseries wherever he is, irrespective of whether or not he has anything to gain by harming or causing pain

to others. This fundamental difference in attitude sums up the difference between a saint and a non-saint.]

दो०. ताते सुर सीसन्ह चढ़त जग बल्लभ श्रीखंड ।

अनल दाहि पीटत घनहिं परसु बदन यह दंड ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

tātē sura sīsanha carhata jaga ballabha śrīkhaṇḍa.
anala dāhi pīṭata ghanahim parasu badana yaha daṇḍa. 37.

[Though the sandalwood does not curse the axe, but Mother Nature does not spare the axe from being punished. How? This is explained now.]

The sandalwood retains its fragrance and is used as an offering to the fire sacrifice and for other auspicious needs, but the face (cutting edge) of the axe is put in the fire and beaten by a heavy hammer to sharpen its edge. (Doha no. 37).

[Note—In spite of being deformed and dismembered, the cut pieces of the sandalwood tree are regarded fit and holy to be used in fire sacrifices. This is an exception—because normally anything that is cut and injured is deemed unholy and unfit for this purpose as it is regarded as polluted. Even when animal sacrifices were done in ancient times, a sacrificial animal was closely examined for any physical deformities, as only a healthy and perfect sample was deemed fit for offering as sacrifice during the rituals. These virtually ‘injured (cut) pieces’ of the sandalwood which should have been deemed unfit for offering to the sacrificial fire are instead used willingly. This is tantamount to Mother Nature praising it for its goodness and virtuous character of forgiveness and tolerance.

As opposed to the sandalwood, the axe is put in blazing fire and hammered hard to sharpen its edges each day after the daily grind of cutting trees. It is a metaphoric way of severely punishing it.

There is another interpretation of this example of the sandalwood and the axe. The sandalwood tree gives out more intense fragrance when it is cut. This is due to effusing of sweet fragrant sap when the tree and its branches are cut. The tree is located at a single place, but the pieces that are cut from it are taken to different places where they spread their fragrance. This is a metaphoric way of saying that saints are able to influence a large section of society in spite of their remaining at one place.

But the irony is that the axe, which comes directly in the contact of the sandalwood and is fortunate to get its fragrance and sap smeared on its surface, gets put in the fire and beaten mercilessly. It never benefits from this holy contact. Thus, non-saints are so unfortunate that even if they have the good fortune of being in direct touch of great saints, they are unable to benefit from this luck, and continue to suffer in this world and heaped with ignominy.

Tulsidas’ another classical work known as the ‘Dohawali’ has verse that uses a metaphor to describe the difference between a saint and a non-saint by using the metaphor of the birds known as Chakor and Chakva as follows—

Goswami Tulsidas’ Dohawali, Doha no. 194—

रघुबर कीरति सज्जननि सीतल खलनि सुताति ।
ज्यों चकोर चय चक्कवनि तुलसी चाँदनि राति ॥

‘Raghubar kirati sajjanani sital khalani sutaati, jyom̐ chakor chaya chakkavani tulsi chaandani raati’.

“The full moon night is a provider of comfort, solace, peace and joy to the bird called Chakor, while it is tormenting for the bird called Chakva¹.

Similarly, Tulsidas says that the glories, the fame and the divine stories of Lord Sri Ram provide peace, tranquility, happiness and joy to good people (gentlemen; those who are pure and gentle at heart, those who are pious, holy, noble and spiritually inclined), but the holy name of the Lord and his divine stories (or any talk about him and even the mention of him) creates torments, annoyance, irritation and heart-burn among miscreants and evil people.”

The Chakva is the ruddy goose or an ostrich. The Chakor is the Indian red-legged partridge. The same light of the full moon appears to torment the Chakva while it pleases the Chakor. The Chakor feels happy at the sight of the moon, while the Chakva shuns it.

These two birds are used as metaphors to describe how the divine stories of Lord Ram—and for that matter any thing related to spiritualism—is liked by saintly and noble people, but abhorred by non-saintly and wicked people. It also emphasizes how the same story is interpreted differently by these people.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 16 says—“Lord Sri Ram manifested in this world like the full moon coming up in the eastern horizon to give happiness to saintly people and act like the frost or snow for the lotus flower symbolizing those who are wicked and evil.” The same lotus blooms when it sees the full moon in an ordinary night, but it shrivels and dies when the same moon rises in a night that is biting cold, when there is frost and it begins to snow.

In the present context it means that the same story of Lord Ram gives immense pleasure and spiritual comfort to those who are noble and saintly, while tormenting and annoying those who are evil and wicked.

Evil, sinful, pervert and wicked people have a natural tendency to see the wrong side of everything. They are compared to the bird Chakva which is angry when the full moon rises on the horizon because it torments this bird. While this moon is welcomed by the rest of the creatures, this is the only bird which abhors it, hates it, and treats the full moon with utter disdain and contempt.

Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 64 says “cool (good, pleasant) advice that should have been soothing and comforting (for Sita) appeared to torment her like the fire of hell just as the case of the Chakva which feels extremely unhappy and agitated during the night of the full moon of the Sharad Purnima (though this moon provides comfort, peace, solace and happiness to the rest of the world)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 1, Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Uma that—“Lord Ram’s divine glories and eclectic qualities are extremely sublime, and are very mysterious and enigmatic—i.e. they are not easily understandable by all. While saints and wise people who hear them and do understand them develop spiritual wisdom and the virtue of renunciation, those who are of low and corrupt intellect, those who are opposed to the Lord and have no spiritual inclination or desire to follow the righteous path of Dharma (proper thought and noble intentions in life) prick holes in it and twist the story to suit their vested interests. They therefore get sucked in the endless vortex of delusions and confusions, while the saintly people find liberation and deliverance from the same story.”

For instance, saintly persons find in the story the nectar-like message of the importance of having devotion and submission for the Lord as an easy means of attaining spiritual emancipation and salvation; they analyse the different aspects of the story and pick up gems of spiritual wisdom and countless advices for leading a life that is auspicious, righteous, noble and

holy; they read the story and hear it being told as a tool for obtaining peace, solace, succour and comfort for their mind and heart.

The wicked people and those with pervert mind find countless faults in it and point out so many taints in the character of Lord Ram. They treat it as some fictional writing which is meant to entertain.]

चौ०. बिषय अलंपट सील गुनाकर । पर दुख दुख सुख सुख देखे पर ॥ १ ॥

caupāṭi.

biṣaya alampaṭa sīla gunākara. para dukha dukha sukha sukha dēkhē para. 1.

Saints and pious people do not get indulgent, engrossed and entangled in the material objects of the senses in the world and their temptations of pleasure and comfort. They are a treasury of politeness and good virtues. They feel sorrowful and miserable at the sorrows and miseries of others, and delighted at seeing others happy. (1)

[Note—The word ‘Vishaya’ refer to the charms and temptations of the objects of the senses in the material world. This concept is closely related to another spiritual fault—known as ‘Vasana’ which refers to the desire of the sense organs for self gratification and yearning to derive pleasure and comfort from their respective objects in the external world. Thus, not to be entangled in these things is one of the main signs of saints.

Does it mean that one should run away from the world, when it is said in the scriptures that this world is governed by the law of Karma—i.e. as long as one lives in this world he must do something to survive as well as to chalk out a path for his future. The trick is to continue doing deeds and maintain one’s stable position in the world that has come to a person’s share, but to remain neutral and dispassionate towards everything in this mundane and mortal world, not to get emotionally and sentimentally involved in or attached with anything, to do everything to the best of one’s ability without worrying for the result and then offering both the deed as well as its consequences as an offering to the Lord God, and so on and so forth. If one is able to successfully lead a life in this exalted way then it is as good as actually and physically renouncing it and becoming a hermit. There is no need to make the body suffer by the hardships of the forest if one can remain in the household in the physical terms but remain detached from all temptations of the world and the sense organs internally at the mental and emotional plane.

To have sympathy and empathy are another two virtues a saint possesses. Since he is merciful, compassionate and loving, since he sees his Lord in each living being, since he is enlightened and realised enough to see the same Atma (soul) in all the creatures, these virtues come to him naturally. This fact is endorsed in the next line.]

सम अभूतरिपु बिमद बिरागी । लोभामरष हरष भय त्यागी ॥ २ ॥

sama abhūtaripu bimada birāgī. lōbhāmarāṣa harāṣa bhaya tyāgī. 2.

They maintain poise and equilibrium of mind and thoughts so much so that they have practice exemplary level of equanimity, neutrality, dispassion, a sense of evenness and detachment along with the grand virtues of forbearance and tolerance. They treat all the creatures and things equally, with stoic indifference. They do not treat anyone as a friend nor someone else as an enemy. [Since they treat everyone alike, naturally such a person has no enemy, as all are his friend.]

They are free from the negative quality of Mada (ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and vanity). They, on the other hand, have an abundance of the positive virtue of Vairagya (renunciation). They abandon Lobha (greed), Krodha (anger), Harsha (feeling of joy from worldly gains) and Bhaya (fear from anything related to this mundane gross existence). (2)

[Note—Obviously, when a person practices exemplary equanimity, neutrality and detachment on the one hand, and treats everyone, everything and every situation alike, there is no occasion for such negative traits as listed in this verse to ever find a foothold in his mind, sub-conscious and heart.

When a man has no 'Mada' he will be humble, polite, simple, readily approachable and affable. Since he treats everyone alike, he has no enemy or friend. Since he has no enemy, he has no 'Bhaya'. Since he practices 'Vairagya' (i.e. has renounced everything and all sorts of attachments and infatuations), he has no 'Lobha'. Since he has no 'Lobha', he is eternally contented. All these go together to make him free from 'Krodha' and 'Haraha' because the former (Krodha) arises when a person's desires are not fulfilled or when his ego is hurt, and the latter (Harsh) arises in the opposite situation. Practice of equanimity takes care of them both.]

कोमलचित दीनन्ह पर दाया । मन बच क्रम मम भगति अमाया ॥ ३ ॥

kōmalacita dīnanha para dāyā. mana baca krama mama bhagati amāyā. 3.

Their mind and sub-conscious as well as their nature are extremely supple, mild, tender, affable and calm. They have mercy, sympathy, empathy and compassion for the lowly and the humble, for those who suffer and are miserable.

They have the purest form of Bhakti (devotion, dedication, submission) for me, and their mind and heart, their words and their deeds are all dedicated in this direction. They are free from the influences of Maya (delusions pertaining to this world and its temptations that are entangling for the soul). (3)

[Note—Those who feel the pain of others, and empathize with other creatures and their sufferings, naturally have a compassionate, merciful and tender mind. It is a character of saints—refer also Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 2 where it is said that sage Narad was filled with pity and mercy for Jayant when he saw his miserable condition. The incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1, till Doha no. 2. It so happened that Jayant, the son of Indra, ran from one god to another god seeking protection against an arrow shot at him by Lord Ram for a grave mischief he had committed. Jayant had bitten Sita and made her bleed. No one gave him any protection against the wrath of the Supreme Lord, but when sage Narad saw his pitiful condition he felt mercy for him. This is because Narad was a 'saint'. He advised Jayant to go and ask Lord Ram for forgiveness, which is the only method for his safety now.

The concept of 'Bhakti' (devotion, dedication, submission and love for the Lord God) has been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas at countless places. Some of them are the following—

(i) Ayodhya Kand: 2/93/6; 2/131/5-6; 2/137/1; 2/204; 2/219/4-5; 2/265/3; 2/291/1-3; 2/299/203; 2/301/3.

(ii) Aranya Kand: 3/16/2-9; 3/35/7—3/36/7.

(iii) Kishkindha Kand: 4/12/1-2; 4/15/10.

(iv) Sundar Kand: 5/46/1-4, 6—5/46; 5/48/1-7—5/48.

(v) Uttar Kand: 7/14/5-16; 7/46/3; 7/86/1—7/87 Ka; 7/115/11-16; 7/116/1-8—7/120; 7/122/15-19.

In Tulsidas' collection of verses known as Dohawali, a number of verses are dedicated to the theme of Bhakti—for instance, refer to verse nos. 53-54, 87-88, 126-127, 134-140, 145, 147.

The renowned version of Veda Vyas' Ramayan, known as 'Adhyatma Ramayan', describes Bhakti in its Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 37-39, and in Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 60-72.

The Tripadvibhūt Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 12-14 describes Bhakti in a metaphysical perspective.]

सबहि मानप्रद आपु अमानी । भरत प्रान सम मम ते प्रानी ॥ ४ ॥

sabahi mānaprada āpu amānī. bharata prāna sama mama tē prānī. 4.

They honour everyone else and show respect to them, but do not like being honoured and shown undue importance for themselves. Oh Bharat, they are extremely dear to me as if they are my life. (4)

बिगत काम मम नाम परायन । सांति बिरति बिनती मुदितायन ॥ ५ ॥

सीतलता सरलता मयत्री । द्विज पद प्रीति धर्म जनयत्री ॥ ६ ॥

bigata kāma mama nāma parāyana. sānti birati binatī muditāyana. 5.
sītalatā saralatā mayatrī. dvija pada prīti dharma janayatrī. 6.

They have no desires, wishes, yearnings, passions and lust whatsoever, and therefore no need to fulfill them. They are devoted to my (Lord Ram's) holy name.

[That is, they remember the Lord at all times in their lives, and silently repeat his divine name constantly. It helps them to ward off evil thoughts from entering their minds. They have eliminated all worldly desires and wants, because only when this is brought into practice can one turn himself to the thoughts of the Lord God. The mind and the heart can't do these two things simultaneously; it's either the world or the Lord.]

They are an abode of the eclectic virtues of Shanti (peace, tranquility, serenity), Virati (Vairagya=renunciation, detachment and dispassion), Binati (humility and simplicity), Mudit (cheerfulness, happiness and blissfulness under all circumstances), Sital (calm, self-controlled), and Saral (simple, without pretensions and deceit), Mayatri (friendly).

[Turning away from the world and its temptations automatically makes the mind calm and tranquil. The perceptions of the world have a buffeting affect on the mind and the sub-conscious, and as long as the creature continues to remain indulgent in the world of material sense objects, the mind is constantly pulled in that direction. Then there is the associate problem of the constant nagging of the sense organs of the gross body which is directly related to the equally gross world; they are coparceners in the joint family setup. The Atma of the creature, i.e. the creature's 'true self', is an independent entity, and as long as this Atma allows its self to be under bondage of either of them—the body consisting of the sense organs, and the world of material objects—the creature cannot

ever hope to find peace, bliss and happiness. As long as the Atma remains attached to the body and the world, it is affected by their grossness; and when it frees its self from both of them, i.e. when it gains 'Virati', it regains its primary form which is ethereal, subtle and sublime, a form that is characterized by the grand and eclectic virtues of Binati, Mudit, Sital and Saral.]

They have affection for the feet of Brahmins¹—i.e. they respect those who are elderly, learned and wise in the society.

They are the ones who support, enhance, protect, propagate, and in general act as the crucible that fosters and encourages the grand and glorious virtues of Dharma (righteous and auspicious laws of Nature and God; the tenets of propriety, probity, ethics, morality and nobility in thoughts and conduct). (5-6)

[Note--¹This word *Brahmin* is too often misunderstood and misinterpreted to mean a particular member of the society who is supposed to be given respect, no matter what his moral and educational standard is. The real intention is not that even a corrupt, unwise, morally depraved and foolish person should be honoured just because he is born a 'Brahmin'. The intention of the scriptures is never this. In ancient times this was the class of people who were designated to study the scriptures and act as moral and practical guide to the rest of the society. This was envisioned by our ancestors to help regulate the functioning of the society in an orderly manner by dividing the entire working into four clear segments and delineating each segment with a list of duties its members were supposed to do. This prevented clash and duplicity of work, as each of the four classes knew what it is supposed to do. This in effect created a hierarchy in the society, with the learned ones who were known as the 'Brahmins' occupying the upper rung just like a patriarch of a large extended family who oversees the working and welfare of the entire family. A patriarch is an old man, and has the backing of years of experience behind him. Obviously he is the most competent man to give sane and rationale advice to the younger generation. This exactly was the role of the Brahmin.

Even in the modern world, a child is taught to give respect to his elders; its part of his moral education. Hence, 'paying respects to Brahmins' should be understood in the correct perspective.

The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

An entire Upanishad called Vajra-shuchiko-panishad, belonging to the Sam Veda tradition is devoted to the subject. The eclectic virtues of Brahmins have been expounded in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 5 as well as in Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 10.

The Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, paragraph no. 7 describes in a holistic way the virtues of a true Brahm as the one who is highly wise, self-realised, erudite and enlightened about the Atma and the principles governing the true meaning of Brahm and such religious signs as doing fire sacrifices, wearing the sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the head, observing sacraments etc.

To quote this Upanishad—'A true Brahmin is a wise and enlightened person who treats the Atma, the pure consciousness, as the non-dual Principal of creation (i.e. who regards the Atma as a personification of the supreme Brahm that is non-dual or Advaita and the only supreme Authority of creation), and for whom being steady in his meditation and contemplation as well as

spiritual pursuit is the symbolic tuft of hair—such a person is deemed to be cleansed and made holy by whatever he does. This is because all his deeds are deemed to be auspicious and holy. [That is, he need not do special deeds such as fire sacrifices or observing of sacraments in order to wash off his sins or any kind of spiritual taints that might be adhering to him.]

He is deemed to have completed doing all religious and auspicious deeds required to be done by a man.

It must be understood that such an enlightened man is indeed a Brahmin for he is dedicated and devoted to Brahm (the Supreme Being), he is no less than a God, he is indeed a ‘Rishi’ (or a great sage), he is a ‘Tapasvi’ (or someone who is well endowed with the glorious virtues of Tapa, i.e. austerity and penance, and is steadfast in observing its tenets), he is the best follower of the tenets of the scriptures and an excellent spiritual aspirant, he is therefore the Guru (guide, teacher and preceptor) for the whole world.

A truly wise, enlightened and self-realised aspirant who understands the implications and import of what has been said above realises the truth of the statement that the pure conscious Atma standing for Brahm is the true identity of his. And therefore such an enlightened man declares ‘It (Brahm; Atma; Truth; Consciousness) is me’.

The Pashupat Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 19 describes who a true Brahmin is as follows—“A true Brahmin is one who wears the Yagya Sutra (the sacred thread worn during the performance of fire sacrifices, especially the symbolic one as narrated in verse no. 16), who employs the Pranav Mantra (i.e. the OM Mantra) for his religious needs (such as when doing Japa or repetition, Yoga or meditation, Dhyana or contemplation, etc.), and who is well-versed in the principles of Brahm Yagya (spiritual practices which are equivalent to a formal fire sacrifice but done in a subtle and symbolic manner which lead directly to the realisation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth known as Brahm).

The Gods (the term is a metaphor for the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, nobility etc.) are to be found in the diligent observance of the principles that define a man as a Brahmin. [That is, if a man is a true Brahmin as outlined above, he is deemed to be living God in the sense that he would possess all the eclectic virtues that collectively defined as being ‘godly’.]

The Hans (the enlightened Atma, the self-realised and Brahm-realised person) who adheres to the principles of Sutra (i.e. who follows the tenets that lead to Brahm-realisation, who offers his obeisance to the Supreme Being in the manner outlined in this Upanishad, who leads a life like a true Brahmin as described above) is deemed to be doing the Yagya (the fire sacrifice).

There is no difference between the Hans and Pranav. That is, there is no difference between the immaculate Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ known as the Hans, and the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Pranav. [Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that produces vibrations of life in the ether that are heard in the form of Naad. These dynamic vibrations in the cosmic ether produce sound that is encapsulated in the monosyllabic word OM. Hence, the OM is a sound form or the cosmic Naad known as Pranav which stands for Brahm because it is the latter which has generated this sound. If the Atma is personified as a divine Swan known as Hans, the supreme cosmic Atma known as Brahm is personified in the form of Pranav which is a cosmic sound called Pranav, and which is represented by the word OM. Refer verse no. 17 and 20 of this Canto 1 of the Pashupat Brahm Upanishad in this context.] (19).”

The Par Brahm Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 8-13 describe who *is* a true Brahmin, and verse no. 14 describes who *is not*. Now, let us examine what these verses say.

First let us see *who is not a true Brahmin*:--“Verse no. 14 = Those Brahmins who are engrossed merely in performing rituals and observing sacraments, or who are engaged in the mundane affairs of the world are Brahmins only for name’s sake (and not true Brahmins), because they live only to fill their stomachs and enjoy the fame, comforts and pleasures that come with worldly respect. Such people go to hell at the end of their lives.

[That is, they continue to take birth and die again, and during each life they undergo sufferings and miseries that are part and parcel of gross mundane existence. They do not find Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance, nor do they find peace and bliss that comes with self and Brahm realisation. They do not have true Gyan, and are only pretending to have it to fulfill their worldly desires. In short, they are not true Brahmins, they are imposters, and they do not do justice to the institution of Brahm-hood. They give the holy stature of being a Brahmin a bad name.

The question arises, who then is a true Brahmin? The answer is self-evident in the foregoing as well as the following verses. That is, only those who have true knowledge of Brahm, and the depth of wisdom and enlightenment to understand what the term 'Brahm' is all about, who do not hanker after external purity and formalities but lay stress on inner cleansing and sincerity of purpose are true Brahmins. Such people would not be much bothered about sporting a tuft on the head or wearing the sacred thread to prove that they are Brahmins, but would instead strive to inculcate the glorious virtues that are so typical of those who have become self and Brahm realised, who have really understood the truth and reality of things.] (14)."]

ए सब लच्छन बसहिं जासु उर । जानेहु तात संत संतत फुर ॥ ७ ॥
 ē saba lacchana basahim jāsu ura. jānēhu tāta santa santata phura. 7.

All people who have these positive virtues firmly established in their hearts must surely be regarded as saints. (7)

सम दम नियम नीति नहिं डोलहिं । परुष बचन कबहूँ नहिं बोलहिं ॥ ८ ॥
 sama dama niyama nīti nahim ḍōlahim. paruṣa bacana kabahūṁ nahim bōlahim.
 8.

They have, and practice, the auspicious virtues of Sham and Dam¹ (self control of the senses, and suppression of desires for self gratification as well as for the material world with its temptations, comforts and pleasures).

They never violate the laws of Dharma (probity, propriety, righteousness, ethics, morality, nobility and auspiciousness), and diligently follow them. They never say an angry word to others indicating haughtiness and insult. (8)

[Note—¹*Sham* is control of the Mana (the wayward mind and the heart), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious mind and the subtler aspects of the mind and intellect), and Ahankar (sense of pride in the subtle as well as the grosser aspect of the body of the creature), and concentrating their efforts towards the Lord God represented by the Supreme Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation at the macro level of creation, and the Atma or the soul of the individual at the micro level.

Dam is its associated control of the various sense organs of the body—viz. the five organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin) and the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals).

It is therefore obvious that 'Dam' is control of the grosser aspects of the body of the creature, while 'Sham' is the control of his subtle body.

The *Niyam* means regularity and diligence in observance of certain laws and rules that help the spiritual aspirant reach his goal. There are said to be ten Niyams. They have been already explained in this book in a note appended to the Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 80

appearing in Section 1, sub-section no. (8) above that describes the Chariot of God/Dharma Rath as it was narrated by Lord Ram for the benefit of Vibhishan.]

दो०. निंदा अस्तुति उभय सम ममता मम पद कंज ।
ते सज्जन मम प्रानप्रिय गुन मंदिर सुख पुंज ॥ ३८ ॥

dōhā.

nindā astuti ubhaya sama mamatā mama pada kañja.
tē sajjana mama prānapriya guna mandira sukha puñja. 38.

They remain unruffled and calm even under the greatest of provocations; they treat praises and insults equally with stoic indifference. They have no attachment and affection for anything or anyone in this world, but for my holy feet. Verily I say that such pious gentlemen are very dear to me (Lord Ram) like one loves one's own self, and are deemed to be a temple of all that is good, virtuous and holy; they become a treasury of peace, happiness and bliss.' (Doha no. 38)

[Note—A true saint is one who treats all alike, and is completely detached from the world; he remains eternally calm and poised; he has no trace of ego and pride in him. He is humility and piety personified. Naturally therefore, he is neither offended when anyone speaks ill of him, nor elated at praises.

His only interest is the Lord; he has only one sort of affection—and that is in the holy feet of the Lord God, who in this case is Lord Ram, a personified form of the Supreme Being. The Lord says that such persons are extremely close and dear to him, and therefore they become a virtual temple of auspicious virtues and a fountainhead of happiness and bliss.]

चौ०. सुनहु असंतन्ह केर सुभाऊ । भूलेहुँ संगति करिअ न काऊ ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

sunahu asantanha kēra subhā'ū. bhūlēhum' saṅgati kari'a na kā'ū. 1.

[Having outlined the sublime virtues of Saints, Lord Ram now lists the negative qualities of non-Saints so that the difference between them is clearly marked out. It also helps to understand the virtues of Saints more clearly as now a contrast can be made. If Saints are holy and pious people, the non-saints are wicked, evil, pervert and sinful. The non-saints have characters that are just to opposite of those possessed by saintly people.]

Lord Ram told Bharat—'Now listen; I shall enumerate the outstanding negative qualities of non-saints ('A-Sant'). One should be wary of them and not establish any contact whatsoever with them even by mistake. (1)

तिन्ह कर संग सदा दुखदाई । जिमि कपिलहि घालइ हरहाई ॥ २ ॥
tinha kara saṅga sadā dukhadā'ī. jimi kapilahi ghāla'i harahā'ī. 2.

Their company is invariably a cause of pain, torment, troubles, misery and grief for a person just like a cow of low breed known as ‘Har-haai’ would negatively influence and corrupt another cow of high breed known as ‘Kapilaa’ if both are kept together. (2)

[Note—The cow of low breed is known as ‘Harhaai’ as it has the bad habit of grazing on other’s field and eating everything lying on the wayside, such as paper, wild or dry grass in a field that is dirty and unkempt, thrown away leftover food items that are stale, rotting and stinking, and in general keeping itself dirty and acting in an unholy manner. This term is usually applicable to a stray cow that goes begging for food from house to house; it will keep its self dirty, and its body is infested with germs, worms, fleas and maggots; it kicks even its care-taker and refuses to be milked; it sits at filthy places. The Harhaai breed of cow is fierce by nature, and it is prone to attacking people at the slightest provocation.

In contrast, the ‘Kapilaa’ cow is of a good and noble breed. It shuns all the negative traits of the Harhaai cow. If a cow of good breed, known as ‘Kapilaa’, is left to accompany the bad cow, known as the ‘Harhaai’, then over time the former would naturally develop the same bad habits as the latter. Similarly, when someone keeps contact with an evil person, then in due course of time the former will gradually develop the bad habits of the latter.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, 2nd part of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46 in which Lord Ram tells sage Narad that saints never step on a wrong path even by mistake.]

खलन्ह हृदयँ अति ताप बिसेषी । जरहिं सदा पर संपति देखी ॥ ३ ॥

khalanha hṛdayam̐ ati tāpa bisēṣī. jarahim̐ sadā para sampati dēkhī. 3.

The wicked people have a constant heart-burn; they are ever jealous of those who are happy and cheerful, and become indignant and full of malice when they see the prosperity and well-being of others; they can’t tolerate it! (3)

[Note—This character is the opposite of the nature of saints who feel happy when others are happy, and sad when others are sad—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Uttar Kand, 2nd part of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 38, as well as (ii) Aranya Kand, 2nd part of Chaupai line no. 1 and line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 46 (where Lord Ram has preached sage Narad).]

जहँ कहँ निंदा सुनहिं पराई । हरषहिं मनहुँ परी निधि पाई ॥ ४ ॥

jaham̐ kahum̐ nindā sunahim̐ parāī. haraṣahim̐ manahum̐ parī nidhi pāī. 4.

Whenever they hear criticism of others, they feel so happy and derive immense pleasure as if they have unwittingly found some great treasure lying on the way. [They grab the opportunity to add some fresh spicy and malicious gossip to the already caustic things being said. They consider themselves fortunate at having had the opportunity to help add to the negative information about the person being criticized.] (4)

[Note—This verse is an extension of verse no. 3 above. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, 7/40/2-3. These lines appear below.

Those people who harbour the negative trait of jealousy, malice and envy in their heart are bound to have heart-burn when they see others happy and prosperous. Naturally, when they

hear others being criticized, they feel gleeful and elated. They feel cheerful and exhilarated as if they are given free of cost the valuable assets of others.]

काम क्रोध मद लोभ परायण । निर्दय कपटी कुटिल मलायन ॥ ५ ॥

kāma krōdha mada lōbha parāyana. nirdaya kapaṭī kuṭila malāyana. 5.

They are ever engrossed in practicing Kaam (lust, passions, desires etc.), Krodha (anger, wrathfulness), Mada (arrogance, pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness) and Lobha (greed, rapacity and avarice).

They are merciless, without compassion, are wicked, cruel, pervert, deceitful, impersonators, and sinful; they are a virtual treasure trove of such negative qualities. (5)

[Note—These four vices of Kaam, Kodha, Mada and Lobha are like siblings; they come and live together, and vanish also together. In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 38 (1st line), Vibhishan has advised Ravana that “Kaam, Kodha, Mada and Lobha are the four paths that lead to hell (i.e. to sufferings and pain)”.]

बयरु अकारन सब काहू सों । जो कर हित अनहित ताहू सों ॥ ६ ॥

bayaru akārana saba kāhū sōm. jō kara hita anahita tāhū sōm. 6.

They are inimical to all, and harbour animosity and hatred for others even without any rhyme or reason. They are extremely ungrateful and thankless because they betray and cause harm even to those who are good to them and have been helpful to them. (6)

[Note—Non-saints have a natural tendency of harming even those who do good to them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 121 that reiterates this view when it says “Wicked people are inclined to harm others even if it serves them no good or is not in their interest just the rat that destroys everything in the house and the field though it has nothing to gain from causing this ruin”.]

झूठइ लेना झूठइ देना । झूठइ भोजन झूठ चबेना ॥ ७ ॥

jhūṭha'i lēnā jhūṭha'i dēnā. jhūṭha'i bhōjana jhūṭha cabēnā. 7.

They are liars, impersonators, pretentious and deceitful. They tell a lie when something is to be given to others, and tell a lie when anything is to be taken from others. Similarly, they tell a lie to eat something, and tell a lie when something is to be given to others to eat.

[In other words, their whole world is based on lies and falsehood. No reliance must be put in what they say, what they do, what they give, and how they behave. Their holy principle is ‘falsehood, deceit, conceit and lie’; this drives all their thinking and behaviour. They are boastful and pretentious—they boast that they have done this good and that charity, while the fact is just the opposite. They might say that they have had delicious food when invited to a royal banquet, whereas in fact they may have not been able to eat two square meals for the last couple of days.] (7)

बोलहिं मधुर बचन जिमि मोरा । खाइ महा अहि हृदय कठोरा ॥ ८ ॥

bōlahiṁ madhura bacana jimi mōrā. khā'i mahā ahi hṛdaya kaṭhōrā. 8.

They speak sweetly like the peacock, but their hearts are cruel, ferocious and full of venom.

[The peacock has a pleasant voice, but it is so toxic internally that it can devour and digest serpents which are themselves highly poisonous. Hence, one should be careful and wary of them. Non-saints are smooth talkers and this helps them to lay their trap to deceive unaware people.] (8)

दो०. पर द्रोही पर दार रत पर धन पर अपबाद ।

ते नर पाँवर पापमय देह धरें मनुजाद ॥ ३९ ॥

dōhā.

para drōhī para dāra rata para dhana para apabāda.
tē nara pāmvara pāpamaya dēha dharēm manujāda. 39.

They keep malice, hatred, ill-will and animosity with others, and keep a greedy eye over their women and their wealth. They enjoy hearing criticism of others and themselves indulge in criticizing them. Verily, such sinful, pervert, wicked, lowly and fallen men are demons in human form. (Doha no. 39)'

चौ०. लोभइ ओढ़न लोभइ डासन । सिस्नोदर पर जमपुर त्रास न ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

lōbha'i ōṛhana lōbha'i ḍāsana. sisnōdara para jamapura trāsa na. 1.

'Lobha (greed and rapacity) is their blanket and mattress. [That is, their whole life is surrounded by greed and rapacity. They spend their entire life in attempts to satisfy their greed. Their waking hours as well as their sleeping hours, i.e. their entire life, is overcome with greed. Their mind is overwhelmed with greed; they think of nothing else but satisfying their greed at all costs. While they sleep they dream to acquire so many things of this world; when they are awake they spend their life pursuing the object of their greed. They are never satisfied and contented. The more they have the more they want. This results in a chain of desires that never allows them any peace and rest of mind and soul.]

Their behaviour and life is no different and better than that of an animal—because it is spent in eating and indulgence in sex. They have no fear of hell and its torments. (1)

काहू की जौं सुनहिं बड़ाई । स्वास लेहिं जनु जूड़ी आई ॥ २ ॥

kāhū kī jaum̐ sunahim̐ barā'ī. svāsa lēhim̐ janu jūrī ā'ī. 2.

If they happen to hear someone being praised, they sigh and take deep breath as if shivering and suffering from high fever. (2)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, 7/39/ 3-4, 6 as well as 7/40/1, 3-6 that express the same idea in different ways.]

जब काहू कै देखहिं बिपती । सुखी भए मानहुँ जग नृपती ॥ ३ ॥
jaba kāhū kai dēkhahim̐ bipatī. sukhī bha'e mānahum̐ jaga nr̥patī. 3.

And on the other hand, if they see or find that others are in some unfortunate situation or facing difficulty or suffering in any way, they get ecstatic, feeling cheerful and exhilarated as if they have acquired the kingship of the whole world. (3)

स्वारथ रत परिवार बिरोधी । लंपट काम लोभ अति क्रोधी ॥ ४ ॥
svāratha rata parivāra birōdhī. lampaṭa kāma lōbha ati krōdhī. 4.

They are extremely selfish and self-indulgent; they are even against and inimical to their own family members and their kith and kin. They become liars and pretenders, as well angry and wrathful because they are overcome with perversion, passion, lust, greed and yearning. (4)

मातु पिता गुर बिप्र न मानहिं । आपु गए अरु घालहिं आनहिं ॥ ५ ॥
mātu pitā gura bipra na mānahim̐. āpu ga'e aru ghālahim̐ ānahim̐. 5.

They do not respect and pay heed to anyone, even their own parents, their Guru (teacher and guide), and the Brahmins (elderly and wise men of society). They are despicable and ruined themselves, and have a propensity of ruining others and making them wicked too by their bad influence and corrupt company. (5)

करहिं मोह बस द्रोह परावा । संत संग हरि कथा न भावा ॥ ६ ॥
karahim̐ mōha basa drōha parāvā. santa saṅga hari kathā na bhāvā. 6.

Overcome with delusions and moral ignorance, they develop and harbour ill-will, malice, jealousy and animosity with all others. They neither like the company of saints and holy people, nor do they like to hear the divine stories of the Lord God. (6)

[Note—The heart and mind of non-saints are so tainted and overshadowed with negativity that anything related to the Lord God is unacceptable to them. In this situation, how can any good virtues find a foothold in their inner-self?]

अवगुण सिंधु मंदमति कामी । बेद बिदूषक परधन स्वामी ॥ ७ ॥

avaguna sindhu mandamati kāmī. bēda bidūṣaka paradhana svāmī. 7.

They are like an ocean of bad qualities and evil tendencies. They have a pervert intellect and corrupt mind. They are full of passions, lust and yearning. They criticize the Vedas (scriptures) and ridicule them. And they claim ownership of wealth rightly belonging to others (i.e. they snatch things from others and claim that these assets belong to them). (7)

बिप्र द्रोह पर द्रोह बिसेषा । दंभ कपट जियँ धरें सुबेषा ॥ ८ ॥

bipra drōha para drōha bisēṣā. dambha kapaṭa jiyam̐ dharēṁ subēṣā. 8.

They keep animosity and ill-will with all, but have a tendency of treating Brahmins with greater contempt. Their heart is full of cunning, fraud, falsehood, deceit and conceit, but externally they wear attractive attire and exhibit a pleasant appearance (to mislead and cheat the world, for their exterior is quite the opposite of what is inside their mind and heart). (8)

दो०. ऐसे अधम मनुज खल कृतजुग त्रेताँ नाहिं ।

द्वापर कछुक बृंद बहु होइहहिं कलिजुग माहिं ॥ ४० ॥

dōhā.

aisē adhama manuja khala kṛtajuga trētām̐ nāhiṁ.

dvāpara kachuka bṛnda bahu hō'ihahiṁ kalijuga māhiṁ. 40.

Such kind of despicable, wicked, sinful, pervert and lowly men are not found in Sata Yug and Treta Yug, are in a miniscule number in the Dwapar Yug, but are abundant in countless hordes, and dime a dozen in the Kali Yug. (Doha no. 40)

[Note—There are four eras or epochs according to Hindu belief. The first is called ‘Sata Yug’, the second ‘Treta Yug’, the third ‘Dwapar Yug’, and the fourth is called ‘Kali Yug’ which is the current era. These four eras complete one cycle of creation and destruction. It is believed that the first two eras were highly righteous and noble, while the last, the Kali Yug, is highly corrupt and polluted morally. The Dwapar era had characteristics lying somewhere between the two extremes of being highly righteous and highly corrupt.]

चौ०. पर हित सरिस धर्म नहिं भाई । पर पीड़ा सम नहिं अधमाई ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

para hita sarisa dharma nahiṁ bhā'ī. para pīṛā sama nahiṁ adhamā'ī. 1.

Oh brother (Bharat)! To be good to others and helpful to them, to do things for the welfare and well-being of others—there is no other better deed than this which can be classified as ‘Dharma’. [This is the character of a saint.]

On the other hand, to cause pain and torment to others, to be the cause of other’s miseries and grief—there is nothing more contemptible, condemnable, sinful and unholy than this. [This is the character of a non-saint.] (1)

निर्णय सकल पुरान बेद कर । कहेउँ तात जानहिं कोबिद नर ॥ २ ॥

nirnaya sakala purāna bēda kara. kahē'um̐ tāta jānahim̐ kōbida nara. 2.

Dear, I have told you the final conclusion that is drawn by all the Purans and the Vedas. It is well known by the experts on this subject. (2)

[Note—Just like a judge in a court knows the laws back and forth, and makes a judicious ruling considering all the facts of the case, what Lord Ram has taught Bharat is the conclusion of the scriptures. The Lord says this to stress upon Bharat that what he is teaching him in connection with saints and non-saints is endorsed by the scriptures as well as by those who have expertly interpreted them.]

नर सरीर धरि जे पर पीरा । करहिं ते सहहिं महा भव भीरा ॥ ३ ॥

nara sarīra dhari jē para pīrā. karahim̐ tē sahaḥim̐ mahā bhava bhīrā. 3.

Those who have a human body and cause or inflict pain, misery, grief and torment upon others, such people are invariably subjected themselves to great horrors and misery associated with this world which consists of an endless cycle of birth and death.

[That is, those people who cause pain and misery to their fellow humans are never happy in life. They who cause sufferance to others suffer themselves too. It is a simple equation of action and its equal reaction. Such wicked people do not find peace and happiness themselves though they enjoy seeing others suffering; this attitude to make others suffer is a true sign of a wicked and pervert mind. Such sinful people never find liberation and deliverance for their souls from the horrors of birth and death and their associated torments in this world.] (3)

करहिं मोह बस नर अघ नाना । स्वारथ रत परलोक नसाना ॥ ४ ॥

karahim̐ mōha basa nara agha nānā. svāratha rata paralōka nasānā. 4.

People commit so many countless sins and misdeeds out of Moha (attachments to the material world and the gross body that arises out of ignorance and delusions). They have so overwhelmed by these negative qualities (arising out of overbearing ignorance and delusions that create desires and passions in them) that they remain indulgent in pursuing selfishness, and in the process they ruin their future prospective of spiritual welfare. (4)

कालरूप तिन्ह कहँ मैं भ्राता । सुभ अरु असुभ कर्म फल दाता ॥ ५ ॥

kālarūpa tinha khamā maim bhrātā. subha aru asubha karma phala dātā. 5.

Oh Brother! I (the Supreme Being; the supreme regulator and judge of creation who decides a person's destiny depending upon the deeds that he performs in his life) am like 'Kaal'¹ for them. I give them good or bad fruits (rewards; results) according to their individual deeds.

[That is, if a person is saintly and pious, I reward him with all the benefits that come with following the path of righteousness, nobility and propriety, known as the path of 'Dharma'. On the other hand, if he is sinful, wicked and pervert in heart and mind then let it be known that I will not spare him from punishment, and he has to suffer the consequences of his own actions. I am a neutral judge.] (5)

[Note—¹The word *Kaal* has many meanings, such as death and sufferance. It also means the factor of time. In other words, if a man does not improve himself inspite of all the good advice available to him, if he continues his perver manners, then over time he has to suffer the consequences of his own deeds. His sufferings are his own making, and he should not blame others for it. The Supreme Being has to regulate such a huge world, and therefore he has to be neutral in his judgement as well as vigilant. Otherwise the whole kingdom of the Lord would become lawless and crumble like a kingdom whose king is careless in taking interest in the well-being of his subjects.

The Lord is not callous and cruel; he is merciful. But at the same time he has to ensure that the righteous and the holy people are not subjected to grief because of the activities of the non-saints. Then again, the Lord has to see that if the unrighteous and sinful are not punished, this will send a wrong signal to the good and the righteous. They will lose faith and confidence in the Lord. So after a certain point of tolerance and forgiving, the Lord has to be ruthless and stern in punishing the sinful and the guilty.

When Lord Ram says that he is like a 'Kaal for the wicked person' he means that he will have no mercy for such a person and will not forgive him. A wicked person will be severely punished, and then he must not blame the Lord for being cruel towards him. The Lord has to regulate the world, and any leniency on his part would spread chaos in the society. The Lord has to be strict side by side of being merciful.

The 2nd half of this verse clearly shows that the Lord is a neutral judge for all the creatures—they are rewarded or punished according to their own deeds and actions. There is very interesting spin-off to this premise. A person is rewarded or punished only when he owns up his deeds. If a man claims rewards for good deeds done by him, he cannot run away from the punishment that comes with evil deeds. There cannot be two yardsticks for judging any individual. But the situation completely changes when one offers all the deeds and their results to the Lord God himself—as is done in Bhakti (devotion and complete submission for the Lord). Naturally, the person who practices Bhakti cannot claim any right to the reward for anything good done by him for the simple reason that he has already offered the deed to the Lord God. If this is true for the reward of the good deed, it is also true for the punishment for bad deed.

In other word, a person who has Bhakti in him, who has completely surrendered himself to the Lord God by offering whatever he has to the Lord, i.e. who is a saint by nature because a man who practices Bhakti is a saint by in all his characters, if free from the fear of punishment (as he cannot be accused of misdeeds). Otherwise also, a person who is a saint, i.e. who possesses the magnificent virtues outlined by Lord Ram in these verses, will naturally not do anything that goes against the principles of Dharma, and hence never has to fear the wrath of the Lord.

It is the non-saints who are to fear the Lord, and it is for them that the Lord becomes a Kaal!]

अस बिचारि जे परम सयाने । भजहिं मोहि संसृत दुख जाने ॥ ६ ॥

asa bicāri jē parama sayānē. bhajahirṁ mōhi sansṛta dukha jānē. 6.

Considering all the pros and cons of what has been said (by me), those who are highly wise, erudite, sagacious and clever inculcate devotion and dedication in me in order to find freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death because they realise that this cycle is full of pain, miseries and torments. (6)

[Note—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 78 Ka also reiterates this idea that “those people, whether they are wise or stupid, who expect to attain emancipation and salvation without having devotion and dedication for Lord Ram are akin to an animal who has no tail—i.e. they are oddities, they are anomalies, and they have a deformed mind that thinks irrationally”.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, the 2nd line of Sortha (a type of Doha) no. 89 Ka says that “the Vedas and the Purans have sung (stressed; expounded; asserted; affirmed and declared) that no one can ever find peace, comfort and happiness without worshipping Lord Hari (Vishnu; the Supreme Being) and having devotion and dedication for the Lord”.

Therefore it is wise to get rid of futile debates and discussions that create nothing but confusions and vexations for the spirit, and instead one should commit oneself to worshipping, having devotion and dedication for Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghu dynasty, who shows mercy, compassion and grace (towards his devotees), who is beautiful (i.e. is divine and holy, has noble virtues and auspicious qualities in him), and is the one who bestows all sorts of comfort and happiness (temporal as well as spiritual)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Sortha (a type of Doha) no. 90 Kha.

In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, the 2nd line of Sortha no. 6 Kha it is emphasized that “those who abandon all expectations and hopes from all others in this world, and instead become completely devoted to Lord Ram, worshipping him and having total dedication towards him (implying that they are completely dependent upon Lord Ram for all their needs, temporal and spiritual, for their welfare and well-being), are the ones who are indeed eligible to be classified as being very wise, erudite, sagacious and clever amongst all men”.

See also Chaupai line nos. 7-8 below (i.e. 7/41/7-8).]

त्यागहिं कर्म सुभासुभ दायक । भजहिं मोहि सुर नर मुनि नायक ॥ ७ ॥

tyāgahirṁ karma subhāsubha dāyaka. bhajahirṁ mōhi sura nara muni nāyaka. 7.

They (i.e. those who are wise and erudite) abandon getting involved in deeds, whether these deeds yield good and auspicious rewards or the opposite.

[‘Not getting involved in deeds’ does not mean running away from one’s responsibility in this world. It actually means doing deeds but remaining aloof from them and their results at the mental and emotional plane; doing deeds dispassionately with a detached sense as if these deeds are done as part of one’s duties in life ordained by the Lord God; to do duties as a wish of the Lord and offering each one of these deeds and actions as well as their consequences to the Lord; to do deeds as a service to the Lord to please him and obey his instructions, and therefore staking no claim to its rewards or fear from its punishments; and so on and so forth.]

This is the way the Gods, wise men and sages who are leaders of others worship and adore me. [That is, not getting mentally and emotionally involved in the deeds done by the physical gross body, to do deeds dispassionately and with detached neutrality, to do it as a service of and for the Lord, and to obey his instructions, and to offer both the deed as well as its fruits to the Lord God—this is indeed the way of true devotion and worship of the Lord that is practiced by Gods, sages and wise men.] (7)

संत असंतन्ह के गुन भाषे । ते न परहिं भव जिन्ह लखि राखे ॥ ८ ॥

santa asantanha kē guna bhāṣē. tē na parahiṁ bhava jinha lakhi rākhē. 8.

Those who have properly seen (examined and understood) the virtues and characters of saints and non-saints that I have narrated herein above, never fall in the trap of the cycle of birth and death that is so typical and characteristic of this mundane and mortal world. (8)

[Note—This line resonates with the idea that has been expressed in Chaupai line no. 6 above.]

दो०. सुनुहु तात माया कृत गुन अरु दोष अनेक ।

गुन यह उभय न देखिअहिं देखिअ सो अबिबेक ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

sunahu tāta māyā kṛta guna aru dōṣa anēka.

guna yaha ubhaya na dēkhi'ahiṁ dēkhi'a sō abibēka. 41.

Oh dear, listen! Maya (delusions) has created numerous qualities, both the good and the bad¹.

It is better not to take any notice of them, for once one begins to see them he gets sucked in the vortex of confusions that will cause consternations and vexations for him, and this will be equivalent to his being overcome by 'A-vivek' or ignorance. (Doha no. 41)"

[Note—Since this creation is caused by Maya, it has its merits and demerits. This is the grosser and physical aspect of creation. But at a subtle level, the reality of existence is different; it is the 'pure and sublime consciousness' known as the Atma that forms the true essence of this living world. Whereas the external world has its merits and demerits, whereas its outwardly character has some things that are good and auspicious and others that are bad and inauspicious, its reality is uniformly auspicious and holy as it is 'pure consciousness known as the Atma'. But the unfortunate part is that one is able to see the external world more easily than the subtle aspect of the same world because it is hidden from view. So, if a man relies upon the visible part of the world and attempts to derive at the truth, he will be left swinging between the right and the wrong, the merit and the demerit, the righteous and the unrighteous, the auspicious and the ignoble, and so on—which will leave him flummoxed and bewildered. This is his 'A-vidya'—or lack of knowledge of the 'truth'.

The Upanishads have unequivocally said that it is the same Brahm (the Supreme Being; the cosmic Consciousness) who has manifested in the form of the world. This means that all the

countless units of this creation or world are reflections or images of the same entity known as Brahm. Then obviously there should be no dichotomy and opposite characters in this world. The aspect of the physical world that one sees with his gross organs of sight, i.e. the eye, presents a view that is contradictory to the assertion of the Upanishads that there is universality and uniformity in creation—because the world that the eyes see is the world created by ‘Maya’. Maya itself is a synonym for delusions, and hence there is no wonder in such a delusory sight of the world. Therefore, if one treats the world as the reality then he is overcome with Maya, and hence by ‘Avidya’ because delusions and ignorance go hand in hand. It leads to confusions and vexations, perplexing the spiritual aspirant and leaves him wondering what the truth is. This in turn robs him of this mental calmness and peace.

¹Maya is said to be ‘Trigunmai’—i.e. it is believed that it has the three Gunas as its main components. These three Gunas are—Sata, Raja and Tama. ‘Sata’ is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. ‘Raja’ is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. ‘Tama’ is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used as a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, ‘Tama’ means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These three qualities together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of ‘Sata’ makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of ‘Tama’ which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

The ‘Trigunmayi Maya’ is further classified into three sub-classes—viz. Sata Guni Maya, Raja Guni Maya, and Tama Guni Maya. This nomenclature depends upon the dominance of one or the other of the three Gunas in any given situation. Thus, when the Maya is dominated by the Sata Guna, it is called ‘Sata Guni Maya’; when it is dominated by the Raja Guna, it is called ‘Raja Guni Maya’; and when it is dominated by the Tama Guna, it is called ‘Tama Guni Maya’.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 44, Lord Ram says that—

फिरत सदा माया कर प्रेरा । काल कर्म सुभाव गुन घेरा ॥

phirata sadā māyā kara prērā. kāla karma subhāva guna ghērā.

“A creature endlessly keeps on wandering aimlessly under the influence of Maya which keep him covered (from the Truth) in a veil represented by Kaal (time), Karma (deeds), Swabhaava (nature, temperament and habit), and Gunas (characters that are controlled by the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama)”.]

चौ०. श्रीमुख बचन सुनत सब भाई । हरषे प्रेम न हृदयँ समाई ॥ १ ॥

करहिं बिनय अति बारहिं बारा । हनूमान हियँ हरष अपारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

śrīmukha bacana sunata saba bhāī. haraṣe prēma na hṛdayam samāī. 1.
karahim binaya ati bārahim bārā. hanūmāna hiyam haraṣa apārā. 2.

When the brothers heard the holy words of wisdom taught by Lord Ram using his own mouth (i.e. own words, and himself), all of them were so overwhelmed with happiness and joy that their hearts could not contain them and overflowed with them. (1)

Everyone repeatedly offered their prayers of thanks to Lord Ram. Hanuman was especially very thrilled upon hearing this discourse. [This is because Lord Ram had obliged him by answering the question of Bharat, and in the process elucidating upon the grand virtues of saints.] (2) [7/42/1-2]

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Canto 1.10

Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 47 in which the Lord has preached the citizens of Ayodhya.

चौ०. एक बार रघुनाथ बोलाए । गुरु द्विज पुरबासी सब आए ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ēka bāra raghunātha bōlā'ē. gura dvija purabāsi saba ā'ē. 1.

Once, Raghunath (the Lord of the Raghu dynasty; Lord Ram) called an assembly and invited his Guru (moral preceptor sage Vasistha), the Brahmins and other citizens (of the city of Ayodhya). (1)

[Note—Lord Ram was a king, and it is a moral responsibility of the king to ensure that his subjects live a righteous and noble life according to the established principles of Dharma as expounded and ordained in the scriptures. Besides this, Lord Ram was not merely a worldly king; he was the personified form of the Supreme Being. So from time to time he called all the people and taught them the essence of the scriptures so that not only do they live an auspicious life according to the laws of Dharma, but also find emancipation and salvation for themselves so that the Lord is able to fulfill his promise to the world that he will do everything possible to make sure that every willing creature gets a chance to find liberation and deliverance from the fetter in which he finds himself tied down to this world and its horrors.

Being a noble and great king, it was his moral and ethical duty to ensure that his subjects are properly educated in the finer nuances of Dharma as well as the subtle essence of the truth hidden in the massive tomes of the many scriptures that possibly no one can thoroughly study and understand in his lifetime.

We come to a very interesting conclusion here—only someone who knows his subject properly and completely is able to teach others. That means, Lord Ram had a thorough knowledge of the principles taught by the ancient scriptures. There is no wonder in it—for he is a personified form of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, the all-pervading, the all-incorporating and the all-knowing form of the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma. Even Brahma who is the patriarch creator of this visible creation and the progenitor of the Vedas, the primary scriptures, was born atop a divine lotus that emerged from the navel of this Viraat Purush.

In Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, the 1st half of line 9 of the Chanda (a type of verse) that precedes Doha no. 111, Brahma himself declares that Lord Ram “is a treasure trove of Gyan (knowledge) and Guna (auspicious and noble virtues)”.]

बैठे गुर मुनि अरु द्विज सज्जन । बोले बचन भगत भव भंजन ॥ २ ॥

baithē gura muni aru dvija sajjana. bōlē bacana bhagata bhava bhanjana. 2.

When the Guru as well as the assembled sages, the Brahmins and other gentlemen were properly seated, Lord Ram said words that literally destroy the fetters of devotees who are tied down to the mundane world of countless miseries, grief and horrors, a world that consists of the endless cycle of birth and death.

[That is, the Lord preached them many good, noble and auspicious things pertaining to spiritualism, metaphysics, theology, devotion etc. that would pave the path for immortality of the listener and help him find liberation and deliverance for his soul from continuously remaining entangled in the web of birth and death in this gross world, and suffer from the horrifying consequences of this entanglement.] (2)

[Note—This line can be interpreted in a slightly different way—viz. “when the invited gentlemen such as the Guru, the sages, the Brahmins and the citizens were seated, the Lord, who frees his devotees from the (fear and the tribulations from which he suffers due to the) shackle of birth and death in this mortal mundane world, began to speak”.]

सुनहु सकल पुरजन मम बानी । कहउँ न कछु ममता उर आनी ॥ ३ ॥

sunahu sakala purajana mama bānī. kaha'um'na kachu mamatā ura ānī. 3.

‘Listen all the citizens who have assembled here. I do not say anything because I have any personal interest in it, nor because I favour you over others.

[That is, I (Lord Ram) wish to teach you for your own spiritual welfare and auspicious future. I do not have any selfish motives in speaking to you, such as making you obedient to me or obliged to me. I am the Supreme Lord and caretaker of the whole world, and therefore it is my moral responsibility to guide my subjects on the correct path that will lead them to happiness and peace. When I speak to you, I am speaking to the rest of the world at large through you. It’s my noble advice for human kind in general, and if you benefit from it then it is your good fortune, otherwise you are as unlucky as the rest of the world who has been denied itself this privilege of paying heed to the advice given by wise men ever since the dawn of life in this world. So, listen to me and then do what you think is fit and proper.] (3)

नहिं अनीति नहिं कछु प्रभुताई । सुनहु करहु जो तुम्हहि सोहाई ॥ ४ ॥

nahim anīti nahim kachu prabhutāī. sunahu karahu jō tumhahi sōhāī. 4.

I do not speak anything that is unholy, unrighteous and unworthy, nor do I speak to impose my authority upon anybody, or to show off my knowledge of metaphysical and spiritual knowledge. After hearing me do what you think suits you. [I am not forcing anything upon you just because I am your king and you have to obey me out of fear of punishment. I am speaking for your own long term good and welfare.] (4)

सोइ सेवक प्रियतम मम सोई । मम अनुसासन मानै जोई ॥ ५ ॥
 sō'i sēvaka priyatama mama sō'ī. mama anusāsana mānai jō'ī. 5.

That follower or server (devotee) who obeys me and my advice is very dear to me. (5)

[Note—Lord Ram's approach is one of friendliness and informality. In order to put his audience at ease he has opened his speech by saying that I am not saying anything with ulterior motives or to impose my will upon anyone of you. Listen to me, think it over, and then follow it if you think it serves your purpose. In spite of this freedom it is obvious that those who would follow my teachings will be dear to me like a teacher always favours a student in a class of so many pupils who listens to him carefully, obeys his instructions, and in whom the teacher sees a bright future. The teacher feels that his efforts have been well spent in teaching an obedient student instead of a class of disobedient pupils who mock at him and gain nothing from him.

Though obviously teaching a bunch of inattentive and disobedient students is an exercise in futility, a good teacher is one who does his duty to all of them diligently so that his conscience is clear. It is the misfortune of these rowdy students who had wasted this golden opportunity in life. It is but natural for the teacher to like and bless a particular student amongst them who is loyal to his teacher and worthy of being taught.

This is what Lord Ram means when he makes this statement that those who follow him are very dear to him. It is a matter of common observance that any master or boss will always favour an employee or subordinate who follows his instructions diligently, is loyal and obedient as well as dedicated and devoted to him. Favouring one follower does not mean that the Lord hates others or wishes for their bad future, but it indicates that this favoured follower is the privileged one who will taste the fruit of spiritual bliss and happiness, who will become eligible for emancipation and salvation, for liberation and deliverance.

Lord Ram is not a dictator passing inviolable edicts or mandates, with the threat of punishment. If anyone is forced to follow such orders then he does not become committed to it; it is done under duress, under fear of punishment. It is not the intention of the Lord at all. But at the same time he emphasized that if anyone does follow his advice then such person becomes the object of his special attention as compared to the others. This was the proverbial carrot that the Lord dangled—who would not want to be in the good books of the Supreme Lord? Well at least, with this self-interest in mind, the people will walk on the righteous and noble path that would have its own good affect on their general well-being. So they benefit with two hands—one, they get Lord Ram's favour which will ensure that any inadvertent mistakes they may make in life will be forgiven liberally, and second, they ensure a bright and secure spiritual future.]

जौं अनीति कछु भाषौं भाई । तौ मोहि बरजहु भय बिसराई ॥ ६ ॥
 jāum anīti kachu bhāṣaum bhā'ī. tau mōhi barajahu bhaya bisarā'ī. 6.

Listen brothers! If I speak anything that is unrighteous, wrong or unethical, do not fear from stopping me. [Don't hesitate to raise your objections out of fear of annoying me or fearing punishment. I will welcome your comments if I am wrong.] (6)

[Note—The word 'Bhai', meaning a brother, is remarkable here. All classes of citizens of all ages were present in this meeting. The Lord had used the universal form of address for all of them by calling them 'Bhai' or brother (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43 above). Each individual had a different level of relationship with the Lord—some treated him as their Lord, some as friend, others as their de-facto parent, still others as their Guru, and so on. This is why

the Lord used the equalizing term of 'brother' for them. In Lord Ram's eyes, all of them were equal if they loved him, had devotion for him and were determined to follow the path shown by him; all such people are very dear to the Lord.

The fact that all the citizens treated Lord Ram as their parent, Guru and friend is declared by themselves in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 47. When we read this solemn declaration of the people together with what sage Valmiki says with regard to the places where Lord Ram should live in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130, it becomes clear why the Lord loved all his citizens so dearly as to be worried about their welfare. In this Doha, sage Valmiki has clearly stated "those for whom you (Lord Ram) is a parent, a Guru and a friend, and everything else besides, oh Lord, you should reside inside their heart as if it was your own divine abode".

The Lord is attempting to tell the assembly that he treats all of them as family members, and not as subjects of a king. So there is no cause of fear. Then again, being a king, he is like an elder brother in the family, and this is the reason why he is teaching them; it is his moral duty. Just like during a family get-together, the citizens must act and talk informally as this would bond them more strongly to each others and with the Lord as well. Just like the younger brothers are eager to carry out the instructions of a wise and old elder brother of the family who has spent his whole life rearing his younger brothers as if they were his sons, the citizens should treat Lord Ram with the same emotion and approach.

This word 'Bhai' has been repeated often during this sermon—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

The word 'if' used by Lord Ram implies that 'I will not speak anything that is wrong, but in case I make an inadvertent error, you must feel free to object to me'.

All these things show that Lord Ram was an extremely polite, affectionate, affable and friendly ruler. He had no trace of arrogance or vanity around him. The subjects of the kingdom felt motivated to obey him out of their natural sense of loyalty and affection for such a gracious king.

The reason why Lord Ram said 'if I say anything wrong or improper then feel free to stop me or object to what I say' is that his learned Guru (moral preceptor and teacher who was the royal high priest) sage Vasistha as well as many learned and elderly Brahmins were sitting in the audience along with the citizens. The Lord is about to teach the assembly on spiritual and metaphysical subjects that should have been normally done by them, and this would apparently seem a transgression. This problem is compounded by the use of the word 'Bhai' (brother) which should not be used for a senior person such as one's Guru and an elderly Brahmin. Hence, to overcome this objection, the Lord added a caveat giving them a free and fearless hand that 'if he makes any mistakes, they are free to raise an objection and stop him right then'. This single clause removed any chance of unwarranted misunderstanding or any subtle hint of any sort of insult or insubordination that would otherwise may have been caused.

The Lord went to this great extent to honour the elders present in the assembly, for otherwise it would have sent a wrong signal that he had insulted his Guru and the Brahmins by preaching even to them, something that would have been improper—though of course Lord Ram was within his rights to preach or teach others as he was a king-emperor and it was not only his right but even moral duty to show the citizens the right path and call a general meeting at regular intervals where policy matters are discussed. The teachings of Lord Ram to his subjects comes under this category as well—for he wanted to tell one and all that he wants everyone in his realm to observe the principles of Dharma, i.e. the principles of morality, propriety, probity, honesty, truthfulness, uprightness, auspiciousness and righteousness so that the kingdom becomes a model state.]

बड़ें भाग मानुष तनु पावा । सुर दुर्लभ सब ग्रंथन्हि गावा ॥ ७ ॥
 baṛēṁ bhāga mānuṣa tanu pāvā. sura durlabha saba granthanhi gāvā. 7.

It is out of great luck and good fortune that a creature gets the body of a human being. it is rare even for the Gods, and this fact is endorsed by all the scriptures. (7)

[Note—According to the scriptures, a Jiva, the living being, roams around in 84 lakh births before he gets a human body. 1 lakh = 1,00,000. Refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 44 below (i.e. 7/44/4).

To say that the Jiva, the living being, wondered in so many lives and passed through so many bodies before he could assume the body of a human being was the way our ancient sages and seers expressed what modern science has established—that the human race is the pinnacle of evolution which was set in motion by the creation of a single-celled organism such as the amoeba, the paramecium or the bacteria. Gradually as this world evolved, the complexities of the physical structure of the body went on increasing, till we had the monkeys and the chimpanzees. And then finally came the human beings, the upper rung of the evolutionary ladder. So many factors impinge during the long journey of the atomic Atma from its one-celled habitat to the multi-tissue and most complex habitat known as the human being that unknown and unpredictable things could have happened to it on the way. Hence, the very fact that the Atma, the spark of life known as the ‘soul’ or the ‘pure consciousness’, has managed to steadily climb the ladder to reach this citadel is in itself a rare achievement.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 5 that precede Doha no. 44 below (i.e. 7/44/1-2, 5).

Lord Ram has told sage Kaagbhusund the same thing that he favours human beings more than all other forms of the Jiva (living being), though it is a fact that the entire creation, consisting of both the movable as well as the immovable creatures, is his off-spring and has been created by him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 86.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 121, sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that—“There is no other form (body) that is as good and desirable as the body of the human being. All the creatures of this world consisting of inanimate as well as animate things yearn to acquire it. The human body is the stepping stone to attain both the heaven as well as the hell. It is also the mean by which a creature can hope to find his final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration in this world. It also grants Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti. {That is, the Jiva can obtain these three fruits of truthful spiritual knowledge as enshrined in the scriptures, practice the eclectic virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, as well as devotion, dedication and submission for the Lord God through the medium of the human body.} If a Jiva is stupid enough not to properly use this golden opportunity to worship the Supreme Being and have devotion for the Lord to ensure their secure destiny and spiritual well-being then they are like the idiot who throws a precious gem to grab a worthless piece of glass.”

The Gods do not have a physical body and form; they live in a Spirit form. Though this form has its merits, but it also has its demerits. For instance, the Gods depend upon the humans for their sustenance by way of offerings made by the latter during religious rituals and fire sacrifices. That is why the demons led by their king Ravana prevented sages and hermits from doing fire sacrifices and other religious duties so that their arch enemies, the Gods, would be deprived of nourishment and ultimately starve to death. This fact is stated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 181 and its preceding Chapai line nos. 5-8.

Another reason of saying that the human form is more worthy than that of the Gods is because Mukti (liberation and deliverance) of the Atma is obtainable only through its auspicious deeds done through the medium of a body, and the human being has this privilege which the

Gods lack as they do not have a body. The Jiva's Atma can, in other words, use this physical body of a human being to obtain its final Moksha (emancipation and salvation), something it cannot achieve as a God. This is because when the Atma's accumulated good effects of the auspicious deeds done by it in its previous life as a Jiva, which had made it into a 'God' is exhausted, it has to go back to its earlier form as a Jiva with a physical body, instead of directly finding Mukti or Moksha from the level of the God form. In other words, there will be a time when the God's accumulated treasure of auspicious fruits is exhausted, and then the Atma that has assumed this non-physical form will have to revert to the form of a Jiva with a physical body. It clearly implies that Mukti or Moksha is obtainable only through the medium of the gross form of the body, one of which is the human body. Compared to the other forms of the Jiva this human body is rated highly because a human being can do many auspicious things which any of the other forms of the Jiva cannot do—such as for example making charities and doing religious duties including making offerings to Gods. The latter is of great importance because the Gods take care of all the functions of creation and act on behalf of the Supreme Being as his sentinels and subordinates who are assigned specific duties so that the Supreme Being is able to regulate the world in an orderly manner.

One has the misconception that the reward of leading an auspicious and righteous way of life is to attain heaven as the ultimate boon. This thinking is erroneous and fallacious because even if one attains heaven and a stature equivalent to the Gods, a time will come when all the accumulated treasure of good deeds which enabled the Jiva to attain heaven will be exhausted, and then with no back-up to fall back upon, the Jiva will be forced to come back and take a birth again in this mortal world. In other words, even after obtaining heaven there is no certainty of eternal peace, bliss and happiness. The only difference between heavenly pleasures and comfort and their worldly counterparts is the duration of enjoyment—the life in this mortal world is short as compared to the span of life as a God. But that is the end; sufferings do not cease completely and permanently even for the residents of heaven. This fact is clearly endorsed below in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44 (i.e. 7/44/1).

These facts are endorsed in the next lines in an unequivocal term.]

साधन धाम मोच्छ कर द्वारा । पाइ न जेहिं परलोक सँवारा ॥ ८ ॥

sādhana dhāma mōccha kara dvārā. pā'i na jēhiṁ paralōka samvārā. 8.

It (the human body) is a virtual blessing in disguise as it is regarded as an abode or a store-house of all means by which a Jiva (the living being) can do spiritual endeavours and neutralize the bad effects of any past misdeeds done by him in his previous lives, paving the way for his Moksha—emancipation and salvation of the soul. In other words, the human form is a doorway or a stepping stone for the Jiva's final Mukti—i.e. the final liberation and deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death.

If a person does not ensure a good spiritual future and well-being for himself with this blessing of the human form, then obviously he is extremely unfortunate and stupid. (8)

[Note—The fact that Moksha can be attained by a Jiva in the form of a human being instead of as a God has been explained in the note to line no. 7 above.

The path followed by a Jiva's true self, i.e. his Atma, upon death have elaborately been described in the following Upanishads—(i) Subalo Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishad, canto 2, verse no. 4; canto 14, verse no. 1; and canto 15, verse no. 1. (ii) Brihad

Aranyaka Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, 3/2/11—13, 3/9/28, 5/10, 5/11 and 6/2/1—16. And in (iii) Chandogya Upanishad, 5/3/1—5/10/10 of the Sam Veda tradition.

In fact, the Brihad Aranyak Upanishad says in its Canto 6, Brahman 2, verse no. 15 that the Atma's final liberation and deliverance is obtained by living an auspicious life as a human being. This is because it is through this form that the Atma can perform many spiritual endeavours that are not possible in other forms.

There are countless advantages of a human body over other forms that the Atma gets due to a variety of reasons, both the lower forms of so many other non-human forms as other creatures all having a physical body, as well as the exalted Gods who live in the heaven without a physical body. As has been said earlier, it is through the human body that the Jiva's Atma can do many auspicious deeds and enter willingly into many spiritual endeavours which is not possible for it to do in any other form.

Human being is like the 'emperor' of the physical world, and if an emperor does not ensure a comfortable life for himself and secure his future, who will? He has all the means and wherewithals to fulfill all his desires; he has just to mention his wish and the subordinates almost fall upon each other to carry out his orders to please him. Likewise, a human being can use this golden opportunity to secure a sound spiritual future for himself—and it is to break free from the shackle of birth and death to find his final liberation and deliverance. If unfortunately he misses this opportunity it will be highly stupid of him like a person who first pawns his pot of gold and then goes out begging for money?

The human body is said to have many doors. According to the Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse no. 7, there are *five* doors of the body through which the mind wanders out into the external world and becomes aware of it. These five doors refer to the five organs of perception of the body—viz. the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin. Now, let us see what this Upanishad says—

“Verse no. 7 = The body of the creature has five ‘doors’. These five doors are actually the five sense organs of perception such as the eye etc. The mind ventures out into the world through these five doors. In other words, the mind perceives the external world through these five sense organs. You (Nidagha) must think in this term.

[Just like a man goes out of the house through the door to see the world outside, the mind wanders into the outside world and ‘sees’ it through the five organs of perception in the body. For instance, the mind ‘sees’ the sights of the world through the organ known as the eye, hears its noises and sounds through the organ known as the ear, smells its scents through the organ known as the nose, tastes through the organ known as the tongue, and feels the world through the organ known as the skin. These organs of perception of the body employ the medium of the mind to make the Atma aware of the existence of the majestic world with its numerous charms and fascinating forms.

It follows that if one closes these so-called doors, the mind would not be able to perceive anything of the external world because it would not be able to venture out into it. The world would cease to exist for the mind. Hence, if one is able to exercise control over the sense organs of perception of the body, one would easily prevent the mind from wandering out into the material world, getting enthused by its fascinating temptations, and then falling prey to its magnificent charms, however illusionary they are. Once trapped in the maze of delusions and falsehoods, the creature finds it exceedingly difficult to get out. The result of exercising control over the sense organs of the body is a restrained mind, a calmed and rested mind that would not be overwhelmed by the stupendously magnificent scene that unfolds before it as soon as it steps out into this colourful and flamboyant world which is like a stage-managed scene created by a magician. Such a mind would not be the cause of any restlessness and agitation for the aspirant.] (7).”

According to some Upanishads, there are *nine* so-called doors of the body, and they are two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer: (i) Krishna Yajur

Veda tradition—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 3/18; Yog Tattva Upanishad, verse no. 141; and Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 2-5. (ii) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 107. (iii) Atharva Veda—Bhavana Upanishad, verse no.2/1.

Similarly, according to some philosophers, there are *ten* Doors, and they include Brahm Randhra present at the top of the head as the tenth door besides the above nine doors.

According to Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 1, there are *eleven* doors of the body. They are the following—two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, navel, anus, genitals and Brahm-randhra (the hair like slit on the top of the head).

An ascetic uses this last ‘door’ known as the Brahm-randhra to help his life-wind known as the Pran to leave the physical gross body and escape from its clutches. This leads to his Kaivalya Mukti—i.e. once his Pran (which represents both his ‘vital airs’ as well as the ‘consciousness’ that keep his body alive) leaves the physical gross body and escapes through the Brahm-randhra, it never returns back into the body as this is a one-way door.

The other reason for the Pran not returning back inside the body, even if it wants to do so, is that as soon as it emerges out of the confines of the body, it expands in volume immediately. While the Pran was inside the body it had occupied the whole subtle space present in it, and as soon as it comes out it expands automatically to fill the entire space outside it, i.e. the space as vast as the surrounding sky. The volume of the vital winds/airs becomes so huge that now it cannot constrict its self to re-enter the body through this tiny aperture known as the Brahm-randhra. Since this is a one-way escape, it is called ‘Kaivalya Mukti’—a freedom which is one time and final.]

दो०. सो परत्र दुख पावइ सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताइ ।

कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोष लगाइ ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

sō paratra dukha pāva'i sira dhuni dhuni pachitā'i.
kālahi karmahi īsvaraḥ mithyā dōṣa lagā'i. 43.

Hence, a Jiva who does not use his human form to attain Moksha comes to sorrows and suffers in grief both in his present life as well as in his future lives. [He has lost the chance to attain everlasting peace, bliss and happiness; he has to suffer countless horrors that accompany the Jiva's wonderings through the dark and unknown labyrinthine alleys of countless births in this deluding world.]

In frustration and in dismay, he beats his head, becomes remorseful, and blames in vain the Time (circumstances, destiny etc.), his Karma (deeds and actions) and the Gods for his misfortunes and miseries (instead of having any introspection and finding fault right within his own self). (Doha no. 43).

[Note—If a man does not use the golden opportunity to attain spiritual peace and bliss even though the scriptures continue to show him the path and the Lord God himself comes down upon earth to lead by example, if he continues in his old dirty ways of doing just the opposite of what the scriptures say and what the Lord himself says, then clearly he has no right to blame Time, Karma and Gods for his misfortune. He has himself to blame for his miseries. For instance, if a patient does not take medicines as prescribed by the doctor or follow his instructions regarding the precautions he ought to take, then he has no right to blame the doctor or the efficacy of the medicine in being able to cure him.

A remarkable aspect of this Doha is the use of the word 'Ishwar'. Normally it means 'Lord God', the Supreme Being. But here it refers to those supernatural powers of creation or Nature over which a person has no control. Since such powers are controlled by the Lord God, it is deemed that all their influences upon the man's destiny are also controlled indirectly by the Lord God. This term 'Ishwar' should not be confused by the term 'Deva' which means God. These are the junior Gods who simply act on the instructions of the Supreme God.

Now, Lord Ram himself is a personified form of the Supreme Being, so he indirectly tells his audience that if you do not listen to me and do not mend your ways, then later on don't ever blame me, the Ishwar, for your sufferings; I warn you!

The ideas expressed in the forgoing verses are further explained in Goswami Tulsidas' another classical book of prayers known as Vinai Patrika in its verse nos. 201 and 202. This book 'Vinai Patrika' has been prepared and published independently by the author of the present book, i.e. Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.]

चौ०. एहि तन कर फल बिषय न भाई । स्वर्गउ स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi tana kara phala biṣaya na bhāī. svarga'u svalpa anta dukhadāī. 1.

[In the following verses, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and their accompanying Doha no. 44, Lord Ram explains the utility of the human body and the use to which it must be put by a wise person.]

The reward of getting this human body is not to become indulgent in enjoying the sense organs and their respective objects in this world. What to talk of life in this mortal world, even the life in the heaven is short-lived and ends one day. (1)

[Note—Refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 43 above, and the notes appended to them.]

नर तनु पाइ बिषयँ मन देहीं । पलटि सुधा ते सठ बिष लेहीं ॥ २ ॥
nara tanu pā'i biṣayam' mana dēhīm. palaṭi sudhā tē saṭha biṣa lēhīm. 2.

If a Jiva is fortunate enough to get the body of a human being, but mistakenly, out of ignorance, or willingly due to the inability to resist temptations and exercise self-restraint, misuses it (human body) to get involved in enjoyment of sense organs and fulfillment of their endless demands for gratification by pursuing their respective sensory perceptions in the world of material objects—then they are like stupid fools who overturn a pot of ambrosia and barter it for poison. (2)

[Note—The human body is like the pot of ambrosia because it is the medium in which the 'pure consciousness' known as the holy Atma or soul lives. It is also the habitat of the 'Pran', the vital spark of life represented by the vital winds.]

The Upanishads have universally said that the human body is the abode of the various Gods. The Rik Veda's Aieteriya Upanishad has clearly stated that when the human body was created as an image of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic form of the supreme Brahm, all the Gods entered this body to take up their residence in it. For instance, the Sun God lives in the eye;

the Moon God in the heart; the Wind God as the Pran or vital winds; the Fire God as the warmth of the body; the Water God as the fluid part of the body; the Earth Goddess as the grosser parts of the body such as bones and skin; the Sky God as the subtle space between the tissues and organs inside the body; and so on. Refer--Aieteriya Upanishad, Canto 1, sections 1-3 of the Rig/Rik Veda tradition.

For the purpose of our immediate discussion we deduce that the human body is a 'replica' of the macrocosmic, invisible and all-encompassing divine body of the Supreme Being. Well, it is now clear why the human body is said to be the most exalted form in the whole creation—it is 'replica of the Viraat Purush, the supreme Brahm'. None of Gods has this unique privilege. Naturally therefore, if a man is so stupid as to waste it in pursuing pecuniary benefits or material things that are perishable and worthless in the long run, would he not be called short-sighted, ill-witted and a block-head? Who else will be classified as such if not a man who wastes his life in pursuing the pleasures of the sense organs that are extremely selfish, whose life is spent in an attempt at deriving comfort from the world which is a mine of miseries, and who thinks that he will continue to enjoy forever whatever he has acquired inspite of seeing death all around him and being repeatedly told that his own body will be dead and gone one day?]

ताहि कबहुँ भल कहइ न कोइ । गुंजा ग्रहइ परस मनि खोई ॥ ३ ॥
tāhi kabahum̐ bhala kaha'i na kō'ī. guṇjā graha'i parasa mani khō'ī. 3.

Who will call a man wise and intelligent who throws away a precious gem known as the Paras Mani (a magical stone that is able to convert any metal into the precious metal gold by its mere touch; the philosopher's stone), and accepts in its place the worthless seed of the peppercorn (known as 'Gunja'; it is small red-and-black seed of the plant *Abrus precatorius*). (3)

[Note—There is no comparison in the value of the Paras Mani and the Gunja. But a stupid man thinks that the Mani is useless because he would not be able to taste it and use it in his food as spice to jack up its flavour like with the case of the Gunja. So he barter the precious Paras Mani for the worthless Gunja.

Likewise, a foolish man bargains his precious human body for enjoyment of the senses and the world instead of utilizing it to attain Moksha or emancipation and salvation of his self, the Atma, the soul.]

आकर चारि लच्छ चौरासी । जोनि भ्रमत यह जिव अबिनासी ॥ ४ ॥
ākara cāri laccha caurāsī. jōni bhramata yaha jiva abināsī. 4.

The Jiva (the living being) is an imperishable entity (because this word refers to the Atma, the soul which is a subtle, sublime and ethereal entity known as pure consciousness that never perishes, that is eternal and infinite).

This Jiva has roamed around in numerous births, and having done so for 84 lakh times he comes to assume the body of the human being. (4)

[Note—The obvious reason why the Jiva had to go on wandering from one birth to another is its 'imperishability'. The 'Jiva', meaning 'an entity that lives and has the vital spark of life in it' does not mean the physical body of the entity known by this term—because this Jiva is imperishable while the physical body died at the end of each life. Then, what or who is the Jiva?

The 'Jiva' is the subtle Atma or soul or Spirit that lives inside this gross physical body. This Atma is the true identity of the Jiva, the living being. When the body dies due to some cause, this Atma comes out of it, and then it re-enters another body depending upon a number of factors—such as the un-fulfilled desires that the Jiva had in its previous life, the chain of reactions for the deeds done by the Jiva during that life, and so on.

The basic concept is that *the creature attains that place which it desires for at the time of death*—refer Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 12 which is very explicit on this point. Further, it also depends upon the creature's mental awareness and conception of the what constitutes the 'Truth'—refer Brihad Aranyak Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse no. 1-6.

The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 4/4/6 explicitly says that a creature goes to adopt that gross body upon which its subtle self is infatuated or attracted at the time of death or leaving the old body.

The Naradparivrajak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 5, verse no. 23 clearly states that—"A person obtains a destiny, a destination and a new body according to what his thoughts were and what he had been wishing at the time of his death. This is not mere hearsay but affirmed and endorsed by the scriptures (23)."

The Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse no. 1 asserts that if a person worships the Supreme Being *selflessly*, i.e. with no rewards for such worship in mind, he is able to break free from the cycle of birth and death. Its Mundak 3, section 2, verse no. 2 say that a *man who has no desires* or wishes unfilled, i.e. a man who is fully contented, does not take a birth again, while a person who has unfulfilled desires would take a new birth according to the type of desires he has left at the time of death. Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 10 says that the destiny of a person depends upon two things—one, his unrequited desires, and two, the type of habitat or environment he wishes to live in.

The *destiny* of the person depends upon the *type of desires he has* while doing deeds in this world. This is stated in Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 9-10, 13-16; Canto 3, verse no. 7, 9-10; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 33, Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse nos. 4-14.

What happens to *ignorant people* after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

Why does a creature take a new birth is explained in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 24; Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 9-10; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 4/4/6.

The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 4/4/3 describes how the Atma leaves the old body at the time of death and enters a new body just like a caterpillar leaving an old leaf or twig and alighting on a new one. It reaches the end of the old leaf or twig, contracts its body, lifts its upper part, expands the body to get hold of the tip of the new leaf or twig, and then withdraws its body from the old habitat completely to make the new one its abode.

The question *who is a Jiva* has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Paingal Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2; (ii) The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahman Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12; (iii) The Tripadvibhuti Mahanarayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-12; (iv) Goswami Tulsidas' epic narration of Lord Ram's story popularly known as the Ram Charit Manas (the 'Ramayana') describes who a Jiva is in its Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 117.

The Paingal Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2 is dedicated to describe *who a Jiva is*.

"That all-knowing and omniscient Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation) invoked his own stupendous powers that created illusions and delusions in this creation, called his 'Maya', which allowed him to assume any form that he wished, and in conjunction with it (or joining hands with his own Maya, or allowing himself to become veiled in his own delusions) he entered the body of the individual creature. He was so enamoured with his own creation, and especially when he

allowed his Maya to accompany him, that the same cosmic Lord who is beyond comprehension of even the wisest of men and the reach of the holy scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, became engulfed or surrounded by ‘Moha’ (worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments, endearments, longings, love and affections). With this twin fault—viz. Maya and Moha—that supreme Lord who has no attributes and names became a ‘worldly creature’. [That is, when Maya found out that it’s Lord is getting interested in and developing affection for what he has created, it went ahead to fulfill the wishes of its Lord like a faithful and obedient servant would. Maya went literally overboard to please the Lord, and knowing that he might balk and suffer from indecision as to whether or not to allow himself to plunge in the formidable web of creation that he plans to unfold (because Brahm was an enlightened Being, and he would soon realise his failings), Maya showed its sly hand and made him get infatuated and enamoured with the creation to such an extent that the Lord lost awareness of who is was, and consequently became engrossed in this world like a fish takes to water at the first opportunity. Say, if this can happen to the Ishwar whose Maya did not think twice in casting its evil spell upon its own Lord, how can an ordinary creature can ever expect to be free from its tentacles!]

Therefore, the supreme Ishwar, now manifested as a creature, the Jiva, began to treat himself as a doer of deeds and an enjoyer of or a sufferer from the consequences of those deeds because he became associated with the three types of bodies that he had assumed in his form of a worldly creature.

When he got associated with the body having three divisions (gross, subtle and causal), he naturally lived through all the states through which these bodies pass during their sojourn in this mortal world—such as the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state of existence. Further, since he had assumed all the characteristics of a creature’s body, he assumed that he would die like an ordinary creature. Thus, the immortal Lord became mortal! [In other words, once Maya and Moha had their upper hands, the Lord of creation was misled to believe that he is an ordinary mortal being who has a mortal body, undergoes the three states of existence so characteristic of the body, that he would die, and that he would enjoy or suffer the results of his deeds.]

As a result he went round and round like the bullock turning the water-wheel or the potter’s wheel which goes on endlessly turning; he got trapped in this wheel of a continuous cycle of birth and death (12).

Why is a Jiva trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death in this world has been answered in the Atharva Veda’s Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 13, and Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-8. This is in addition to the explanation given by Lord Ram below in Chaupai line no. 5.]

फिरत सदा माया कर प्रेरा । काल कर्म सुभाव गुन घेरा ॥ ५ ॥

phirata sadā māyā kara prērā. kāla karma subhāva guna ghērā. 5.

The Jiva falls in the trap laid out by Maya (the delusion creating powers of the Supreme Creator) which casts its magical veil of delusions around him that makes the creature continue to roam indefinitely in different births driven by his destiny and circumstances, his deeds and actions, his habits, temperaments and natural inclinations, and the various Gunas (qualities that govern his character, thought processes, emotions, behaviour, reactions to situations, mentality and attitude etc.). (5)

[Note—It is very easy to visualize how this happens by way of an example. Suppose we cover a man with a thick blanket or blind-fold him. Then he is left to go wherever he wants in an open field without any support or guidance. One can well imagine what will happen. The case with the

Jiva is identical. He is covered by the thick veil of Maya, and so he is unable to see his spiritual destination. He goes round and round like a bullock yoked to the water-wheel that pulls out water from the well to irrigate the farm. The bullock thinks that it has not reached its destination as it sees the same scene after each turn, so it continues to go round and round in its attempt to move ahead.

The veil of Maya traps the Jiva in the countless deeds he does, actions he takes, circumstances he has to face and overcome, the bad and good times that buffet him like the waves of the ocean tossing around the ship, and the numerous character traits that he carries along as his unique identification. All these things are controlled by Maya which uses the three classical Guna, known as the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna.

The Jiva forgets in this tumult his original nature and identity as being the Atma that is not the gross physical body but the pure Consciousness. He forgets in the mellee of life that everything that has upset him and robbed him of his peace are related to the gross body, and not to the subtle Atma. The very thought that he has roamed in so many births, that he will die one day and will take a new birth, either as a member of the upper rung of the evolutionary ladder or demoted to a lower rung, proves that Maya has made the Jiva forget who he actually is. Remember: the Jiva is not the gross physical body that takes any birth, grows old and dies; the Jiva is the pure conscious Atma that is eternal, imperishable and constant. A Jiva becomes liberated when he realises this basic fact of existence; this realisation is his enlightenment; it is his deliverance from Maya.

Thus liberated and unbound, he is deemed to be free or 'Mukta'.]

कबहुँक करि करुना नर देही । देत ईस बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥ ६ ॥

kabahum̐ka kari karunā nara dēhī. dēta īsa binu hētu sanēhī. 6.

The Isha (Supreme Lord) often becomes very pitiful upon the Jiva (when he watches its wretched condition and sufferings). So out of his merciful and compassionate nature, the Isha grants the Jiva chance to assume the body of a human being. This is because the Lord is compassionate, merciful and affectionate by nature, and he always is worried about the welfare and good of the Jiva who is none else but the Supreme Lord's own offspring. (6)

[Note—An exactly the same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precedes it in which the Lord tells Kaagbhusund as follows—“All the creatures in this world have been created by me (the Supreme Being known as Ram). I love them equally as all of them are my off-springs. Out of them, I love the humans more. Out of them, I prefer Dwij (Brahmins); out of them I prefer those who are well versed in the Vedas; out of such Brahmins I prefer those who actually follow the teachings of the Vedas (instead of just muttering their hymns and incantations); out of such Brahmins I prefer those who have developed Vairagya or renunciation and dispassion; out of them I prefer those who have gained 'Gyan' (knowledge of spiritual matters and having wisdom); out of such people I prefer those who have 'Vigyan' (an in-depth clinical knowledge of spiritual matters, leading to self-realisation and enlightenment); and out of them I prefer those who are my ardent followers and are totally dependent upon me, for whom I am the only destination and refuge, the only source of succour and solace, and the only source of help and happiness. Even Brahma, the creator, is equal to an ordinary being for me if he has no Bhakti (devotion), while the humblest and lowly of all the creatures is dearest to me and closest to my heart if he has Bhakti in him.”]

When the merciful and gracious Lord sees the Jiva grieving and feeling wretched from the torments and tribulations from which he is suffering, greatly desirous of getting freedom

from the horrors of the endless cycle of birth and death if given a chance to do so, and making a vow that he will lead an auspicious life, follow the great tenets of the holy scriptures, diligently serve the Lord God to the best of his ability, and help the rest of his bretheren to come out of this quagmire themselves if he is extracted from the bog in which he finds himself trapped endlessly, the merciful and compassionate Lord feels very pity for the Jiva, and eager to provide him with the opportunity he seeks, the compassionate Lord gives the Jiva a chance to become a human being. It is to be noted here that the word 'Jiva' refers to the living being's true identity, and it is his Atma, the pure conscious soul, and not the gross body in which this Atma lives.

If the Jiva is happy in his present circumstances and life, the Lord does not interfere, as the Lord, being the supreme Father, wishes his off-spring to remain happy and cheerful. It is not that the Lord is unaware of the ill consequences of the numerous indulgences of the Jiva in his quest of happiness and joy, but the Lord gives him a lot of chance and freedom to have his full of enjoyments lest he would think the Lord is jealous of his happiness and accuse the Lord of snatching it away. This exactly had happened in the case of sage Narad when he wished to marry, inspite of the fact that he was a mendicant who should never even think so. When the Lord decided that if he allows Narad to marry it will be his ruin, he forcibly intervened and prevented this from happening. And what was the result? Narad accused the Lord of being jealous of him, of being selfish and partisan, and then cursed him vehemently. This curse was the basic reason why the Supreme Lord had to become a human being in the body of Lord Ram. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 128, till Doha no. 138.

So, the Lord waits quietly for the Jiva to pray to him for help. Then the Lord provides the Jiva the opportunity to become a human being. This answers the question 'if the Lord is merciful and compassionate, if he treats all his subjects equally, if he loves them equally, then why does he not make all the Jivas human beings?'

Say, will it not be absurd for an emperor to say that he is unhappy because he was unable to fulfill his wishes? Now, once a Jiva has got the form of a human being, he has no right to blame anyone if he does not use it to the best of its abilities in order to reach his declared goal of finding spiritual peace, bliss, rest and happiness for which the Jiva was so restless in other forms when he had pitifully prayed to the Lord God to provide him an opportunity for it, and the Lord had mercifully granted it to him?]

नर तनु भव बारिधि कहूँ बेरो । सन्मुख मरुत अनुग्रह मेरो ॥ ७ ॥

nara tanu bhava bāridhi kahum̐ bērō. sanmukha maruta anugraha mērō. 7.

The human body is like a ship to take the Jiva (the Atma; the living being) across the endless ocean represented by this world and its cycle of birth and death. And my* grace, mercy and compassion are like the favourable wind (that helps this boat to sail across this vast ocean) (7)

[Note—This analogy refers to the ships that had sails, and depended upon favourable wind to fill these sails to move across the ocean. Here the human body is likened to a boat or ship because like the latter which carries a passenger, the body too carries a passenger—and this passenger is the Atma, the pure conscious 'self' of the Jiva. The larger and sturdier the ship, the more steady it is and the more comfortable is the journey. That means, the Atma living inside the body of a human being finds its journey of life very easy, enjoyable and comfortable as compared to the other bodies it had lived in. This is because the human being is like an emperor of the animate world, and all the facilities made available by the Creator are available to him; he can command anything he likes, and the rest of the creatures are merely his servants.

The journey of the ship across the choppy waters of the ocean will be quicker if the wind is favourable and fills its sails to the full. The countless problems a Jiva faces in this world which tend to rock his boat heading towards his spiritual goal is like the choppy waters of the ocean, and the love, affection, mercy, compassion, grace and benevolence of the Lord that come to the devotee as blessings got for free are like the free wind that fills the sail of the ship and helps it move faster against all odds.

*Till now Lord Ram has used the word ‘Ishwar’, and now he says ‘my’ grace---. It clearly means that Lord Ram wishes to say that the ‘Ishwar’ I was referring to is no one else but ‘me’. This is true as the Lord is an incarnation of the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu, or by other names such as the Viraat Purush or Parmatma.]

करनधार सदगुर दृढ़ नावा । दुर्लभ साज सुलभ करि पावा ॥ ८ ॥

karanadhāra sadagura dṛṛha nāvā. durlabha sāja sulabha kari pāvā. 8.

A wise Guru (moral preceptor, guide and teacher) is like the expert sailor who guides and manoeuvres the ship to its destination. He makes all the necessary things and accoutrements available for the Jiva (to enable him reach his spiritual destination like an expert sailor who takes the ship to its destination). (8)

[Note—The concept of ‘Guru’ has been explained in detail earlier as a note to Doha no. 35 of Aranya Kand. This comes under serial number 3 of this section no. 1.

Even as a ship needs an expert navigator and sailor to cross the surface of the ocean where there are no landmarks like those seen on land to act as guides for the lay passengers, the Jiva too needs the guidance of an expert teacher to show him along the path to his spiritual goal. Otherwise he will be lost in the wilderness. An expert Guru examines the disciple’s spiritual needs and decides the course of action according to his mental abilities, attitudes and nature. Just like all patients cannot be treated with the same medicine, and an expert doctor tackles each of them individually, prescribing different medicines for different patients, the expert Guru devises a unique plan for the individual Jiva.

The importance of a Guru has been stressed by Lord Ram to Sabari in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 35 where the Lord tells her “worshipping the holy feet of one’s Guru is the third (symbolic) form of Bhakti (of mine)”.

Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, 3/46/3, Lord Ram tells sage Narad that “Bhakti includes having affection for and showing respect to the holy feet of one’s Guru, the Lord God, and Vipra (Brahmins)”.

The horrible consequences of not showing due respect to the Guru had been experienced by the great sage Kaagbhusund. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 106, till Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 110 in which the sage describes how insulting his Guru led to Lord Shiva vehemently cursing him.

A Guru is a treasury of mercy, grace and compassion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 7/106/8; 7/106 Kha. He has equanimity, neutrality, evenness of mind, and forbearance; he is free from anger and wrathfulness; he is a treasure-trove of wisdom, knowledge of the truth and enlightenment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 7/107/2.]

दो०. जो न तरै भव सागर नर समाज अस पाइ ।

सो कृत निंदक मंदमति आत्माहन गति जाइ ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

jō na tarai bhava sāgara nara samāja asa pā'i.
sō kṛta nindaka mandamati ātmāhana gati jā'i. 44.

A person who does not cross (i.e. find liberation from) this ocean-like world of transmigration inspite of being provided with all the facilities is indeed worthy of condemnation and contempt, is indeed most stupid, and he deserves punishment that a person who commits suicide gets. (Doha 44)

[Note—If the Atma does not find its liberation and deliverance even after being provided the vehicle of the human body, then surely it is committing suicide—it is cutting short the golden opportunity to enjoy eternal bliss and happiness, it is denying itself the chance to attain eternal beatitude and felicity, which is no less than committing suicide because when a person does so he is virtually murdering his own self. And murder is an unpardonable crime.

In the human body, the Jiva does so many things, undertakes so many deeds and takes so many actions. He cannot say that he did not do anything as a human being. So, he has no excuse why he did not keep his promise that he had made to the Lord God in all his earlier lives that if the Lord gives him an opportunity and makes him a human being then he will do as ordered by the Lord and improve himself. If the human being can enjoy the sensual pleasures of the world, if he can relentlessly pursue the objects of the world and strive to gratify his sense organs, can't he do something for the Atma that lives inside his body helplessly, waiting for a chance to find freedom? Of course such a man is stupid and a block-head.

In verse no. 3 of the Ishawasya Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda it is said that those who commit suicide become an evil spirit or ghost.]

चौ०. जौं परलोक इहाँ सुख चहहू । सुनि मम बचन हृदयँ दृढ़ गहहू ॥ १ ॥

caupā'i.

jaum paralōka ihām' sukha cahahū. suni mama bacana hṛdayam' dṛṛha gahahū. 1.

If you want happiness and peace that is available in the heaven (obtained upon death) in this world itself where you presently live, then you must listen to me attentively and make a firm resolve in your heart to obey what I say. (1)

[Note—This line can be interpreted as follows as well—“If you want happiness and peace in your present life as well as in the afterlife (i.e. if you plan to go to heaven after death; if you wish to ensure a secure destiny for yourself), then you must listen to me attentively and make a firm resolve in your heart to obey what I say.”]

सुलभ सुखद मारग यह भाई । भगति मोरि पुरान श्रुति गाई ॥ २ ॥

sulabha sukhada māraga yaha bhā'i. bhagati mōri purāna śruti gā'i. 2.

Having my 'Bhakti', i.e. having devotion, dedication, submission and affection for me, is an easy and readily available path for your spiritual welfare and good. This is endorsed

and reiterated by the ancient scriptures also, such as the Purans and the Srutis (Vedas).
(2)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16, Lord Ram tells Laxman that “I am very easily pleased by a person who offers Bhakti to me”. Or “The only thing that makes me easily pleased is Bhakti”.]

ग्यान अगम प्रत्यूह अनेका । साधन कठिन न मन कहूँ टेका ॥ ३ ॥
gyāna agama pratyūha anēkā. sādhana kaṭhina na mana kahum̐ ṭēkā. 3.

The path of Gyan (knowledge) is difficult and riddled with obstacles. It is difficult to tread upon it, difficult to be successful in it, and difficult for the mind and heart to maintain their momentum on this path. (3)

करत कष्ट बहु पावड़ कोऊ । भक्ति हीन मोहि प्रिय नहिँ सोऊ ॥ ४ ॥
karata kaṣṭa bahu pāvaḍi kō'ū. bhakti hīna mōhi priya nahim̐ sō'ū. 4.

Even if someone attains success by following the path of Gyan, I do not favour him because Bhakti is very dear to me. (4)

[Note—Two paths have been outlined by Lord Ram here for the all-round spiritual welfare of the creature. One is the path of Bhakti, and the other is the path of Gyan. The path of Bhakti is extremely easy as compared to the path of Gyan.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai 11-16 and stanza ‘ka’ of Doha 115, and Chaupai 1-8 and stanza ‘ka’ of Doha 116, to Doha 120, the crow saint Kagbhusund preaches Garud, the legendary eagle, the mount of Lord Vishnu, the difference between Gyan and Bhakti. In the course of the discourse it is made clear why the path of Bhakti is superior to and better than the path of Gyan in order to attain one’s spiritual goal of attaining Mukti or Moksha (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for the soul). Let us briefly see what this learned sage has to say—

“Garud asked sage Kagbhusund—‘Please tell me oh Lord all the differences between Gyan and Bhakti’. Kagbhusund replied—‘There is no difference between them, both of them are equally potent and efficacious in eliminating the horrors and torments of birth and death. Those who are exalted in knowledge however point out some differences between them. I’ll tell these to you, listen carefully.

Gyan (wisdom, knowledge of truth and reality, erudition and sagacity, spiritual expertise and enlightenment), Vairagya (renunciation and dispassion), Yoga (meditation leading to a union with the Supreme Being), and Vigyan (true Realisation leading to unequivocal conviction and faith on the supreme and transcendental Reality and Truth)—these are all masculine in nature and regards as the muscular male who has strength and powers but can be easily corrupted. A man is physically stronger and more powerful as compared to his female counterpart, and this is right from their birth as a natural phenomenon. Only a man who is resolute and firm in his mind can remain unattached and forsake being lured by the deluding and entrapping charms of a woman, and not the one who is lascivious and passionate and has turned away from the holy feet of Sri Ram”. {Uttar Kand, Chaupai 11-16, and stanza ‘ka’ of Doha 115.}]

The path of Gyan is like a double-edged sword. Oh king of birds, it does not take long to fall (slip, commit errors) and get injured (harmed) in this difficult path. Only those who can

successfully tread across it become eligible to attain the spiritually exalted stature of 'Kaivalya', the spiritual state of existence that is one of its only kind, is the most exalted and the best. [It is known as 'Moksha'—final emancipation and salvation of the soul.] (Chaupai line nos. 1-2).

The great saints and sages (those who are wise and experienced in this matter), the Purans and the Vedas (the primary scriptures), as well as the rest of the scriptures (the secondary scriptures) affirm unanimously that the attainment of the exalted spiritual stature of 'Kaivalya' is extremely difficult and riddled with difficulties. But oh the wise one (Garud), the same 'Mukti' (beatitude, the final emancipation and salvation of the soul that is known as Kaivalya) is attainable automatically, without facing any difficulties or making any special efforts to acquire it due to the grace of Lord Ram which comes when one sincerely worships the Lord and has developed profound devotion and deep affection for him. [Put simply it means that the best kind of spiritual state of existence marked by the highest form of beatitude and bliss, and the best spiritual goal of the soul to obtain its emancipation and salvation are obtained when one adopts the path of 'Bhakti' instead of pursuing the path of 'Gyan'. It is true that Gyan is very powerful and potent, but it is like a male who can be seduced by a cunning woman. On the contrary, Bhakti is like a soft-hearted and kind woman who cannot be seduced by another woman no matter how cunning she might be!] (Chaupai line nos. 3-4).

Listen, the king of birds (Garud). Just as it is impossible that water can stay anywhere if there is no solid ground to support it no matter how hard a person tries to do so (for liquid water needs a hard surface for support), the beatitude and bliss of Mukti is not sustainable with the ground (support) of Bhakti. (Chaupai line nos. 5-6).

Therefore, those who are wise and intelligent prefer to have Bhakti instead of Mukti. [This is because if one has Bhakti, the best form of Mukti that is known as 'Kaivalya' would be easily available. It must be noted that the term 'Mukti' does not necessarily mean Kaivalya, as there are many kinds of Muktis, which broadly mean freedom—such as Jivan Mukti, Videha Mukti, Mukti from worldly problems, Mukti from bodily sufferings, Mukti from bondages etc. But these do not necessarily mean spiritual Mukti of the highest kind—it is called the Kaivalya Mukti. This sort of Mukti is attained by two paths—one is the path of Gyan, and the other is the path of Bhakti. As outlined above, the wise ones choose the latter over the former—i.e. they prefer Bhakti over Gyan. Once Bhakti comes, Kaivalya Mukti is on its way automatically.]

The benefit of following the path of Bhakti is that the basis of all spiritual ailments, such as remaining trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death in this mortal world, which is 'Avidya' (lack of correct spiritual knowledge), gets automatically eliminated, without making any special effort for getting rid of it, just like the case of one eating some delicious food to quench his hunger or for taste but as soon as the food enters the body it begins to get digested because the digestive fire burning inside the body is triggered automatically on its own, and digests the food silently without making it known to the eater. Say, is a man not a dumb fool if this miraculous Bhakti does not find favour with him? (Chaupai line nos. 7-10).

Oh the enemy of serpents (i.e. Garud, who is an Eagle and is regarded an enemy of serpents as it immediately snaps them up if he happens to see them anywhere)! It is just not possible to get across this vast ocean represented by the world of transmigration if one does not become firmly convinced of the eclectic view 'I am a humble servant, and the Lord God is the one whom I serve'. Be firmly established in this view-point, and have steady and robust devotion and affection in the holy feet of Lord Ram. Those Jivas (living beings) who worship and have devotion for Lord Ram—the almighty Lord of creation who can turn the inanimate entities into animate entities, and vice versa—are indeed most fortunate and blessed. (Doha no. 119). Oh Garud! Herein above I had elucidated the principles governing Gyan. Now listen carefully about Bhakti which is like a priceless Gem.

Lord Ram's Bhakti (having devotion, affection, love, faith, belief in the Lord; submission and surrender before him; serving him selflessly) is like a Gem known as 'Chintaamani'—one that removes all worries. In whichever heart it lives, there is illumination in it, day and night.

[That is, any person who has given Bhakti a chance to live in his heart does not have to worry about his well-being any longer, as this now becomes the responsibility of Lord Ram to whom Bhakti is dedicated.]

Unlike the illumination (of spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation) that Gyan produces, for which butter, lamp and wick are needed (i.e. for which many virtues/qualities need to be fostered and carefully nurtured as outlined in the verses quoted above), the illumination produced by Bhakti is self-created; it is an incandescent light that does not need any external aid to illuminate the inner-self of the Jiva.

Besides the illumination created by this Gem, the second natural benefit is that poverty (represented by the need to seek happiness and bliss in the outside world of material sense objects) never troubles the bearer of this Gem (because the presence of a 'Gem' in the heart itself means that the inner treasury is full of riches, the 'spiritual riches' in the form of beatitude, tranquility and contentedness that lead to bliss and happiness).

The third benefit is that the gust of wind represented by temptations of the material objects of the world and the desire of the sense organs for gratification cannot blow out the light of this Gem (because the light emanating from this Gem is self-generated, unlike the case of the light emanating from the lamp representing Gyan which depends upon external efforts as detailed earlier). (Chaupai line nos. 1-4).

The self-effusing light from this Gem helps to eliminate the darkness created by Avidya (lack of Vidya; lack of true and correct spiritual knowledge). The irritating group of insects represented by such negativities as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, pride and vanity) etc. fail to disturb the Jiva and dirty the environs of the Gem. [In the case of an oil lamp, the insects are attracted to its light in their hordes, dance around its flame, get burnt, and die, littering the area around the flame and the lamp. Sometimes it often also happens that they die and fall in the oil and cover its surface with their carcasses, thereby suffocating the wick of its space and the flame of its air, and this results in the flame gradually dying away. In the case of the Gem no such thing can happen because there is no physical flame to attract the insects.]

The net effect is that the person in whose heart Bhakti resides, the evil-mongering wicked fellows such as Kaam (worldly passions), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed) and their like, do not dare to come near him. (Chaupai line nos. 5-6).

For such a man, poison becomes nectar, and enemy becomes a friend. No one can expect to have peace, happiness and comfort without this miraculous Gem. Such a person who possesses this Gem does not have to suffer from any of the grievous mental diseases which torment all the rest of the creatures. (Chaupai line nos. 7-8).

In whose heart resides the Gem representing Bhakti for Lord Ram, verily such a person never has to suffer even a trace of misery and grief even in his dream. Therefore, a person who makes diligent effort to acquire this Gem of Bhakti is deemed to be the most wise, clever, intelligent and fortunate amongst all men. (Chaupai line nos. 9-10).

All said and done, this Gem is accessible only when Lord Ram becomes graceful and favourable upon the devotee. This too is very easy (because the Lord is gracious and merciful and obliging by nature, and a simple request or prayer is sufficient to make the Lord grant this Gem to the devotee), but the irony is that still the unfortunate man rejects it. [In the absence of true knowledge and awareness of who Lord Ram is, the ignorant man thinks that he is submitting himself to heresy, and prefers to follow the troublesome and arduous path of Gyan in his endeavour to seek Mukti for himself.] (Chaupai line nos. 11-12).

The scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the holy Mountains; the divine story of Lord Ram, with its numerous versions and interpretations, are like the numerous mines (caves) in them (where spiritual secrets lie hidden and buried); the many sages and saints are the wise ones who know about them and their sacred location (i.e. they can unravel the mysteries of the story and explain them to the eager hearer); and the wise intellect and mind are like the spade, the shovel and the pick-axe which are to be used to unearth the gems hidden in them (i.e. to

unravel the holiness, the divinity and spiritual message contained in the story of Lord Ram). Oh Garud, the two eyes needed to see this treasure are represented by the twin virtues of Gyan and Vairagya (i.e. one must have a deep and penetrating intellect to understand the import of the message contained in the divine story, and he must have the virtue of renunciation and detachment from this world so that he can concentrate upon benefiting from this knowledge without getting constantly distracted and disturbed by the tug and pull of the mundane world). (Chaupai line nos. 13-14).

A man who searches for this Gem of Bhakti with due sincerity and devotion (commitment and diligence) is sure to find it. This Gem is a treasury full of all happiness and joy for him; it is a giver of all happiness and joy to him. In my (Kaagbhusund's) view, the devotee of Lord Ram is superior to the Lord himself. (Chaupai line nos. 15-16).

If Lord Ram is the ocean, then the wise men (who are devoted to him and possess the Gem of Bhakti) are like the rain-bearing clouds. [The ocean is full of water, but it is of no use to the world because its water cannot irrigate fields and produce crop. The salty and dirty water of the ocean evaporates to form clouds. The water molecules in the cloud are free from their salty origin; they are clean and sweet. When this water, which has its origin in the ocean, begins to shower down upon the earth as rain, it fosters life and greenery everywhere. Harvest and life directly depend upon rain-water, and not at all upon the ocean, though the origin of the rain is in the ocean which is a vast reservoir of water, but the rain benefits the population more directly. This is exactly what is meant here. Though the divine story of Lord Ram is a vast reservoir of spirituality and bliss, its benefit can be enjoyed only when it is explained by wise men, and when the seeker accesses the key to his happiness and bliss, which is Bhakti.]

In the same way, if Lord Hari is like the tree of sandalwood, the saints and sages are like the gust of soft wind (that takes the sweet fragrance of the sandalwood and helps to spread it far and wide). [The saints and sages help to propagate the virtue of Bhakti and other spiritual fruits contained in the divine story of Lord Ram, and make them easily available to this world, in its farthest corner, just like the wind carries the fragrance of the sandalwood to distant places, far away from the physical location of the actual tree.]

Bhakti is the best fruit of all spiritual endeavours, and no one can get it (recognize this fruit amongst the cluster of so many assorted fruits) without the help of saints and sages. (Chaupai line nos. 17-18).

Realizing the importance of saints and other wise ones in the effort to attain the Gem of Bhakti, anyone who seeks them and establishes communion with them is easily able to acquire the Gem of Bhakti of Lord Ram (Chaupai line no. 19).

Brahm whose knowledge is contained in the Vedas is like a vast and fathomless ocean; the virtue of Gyan is like the Mandraachal Mountain; and the saints and wise ones are like the Gods. [This alludes to the legendary churning of the ocean by the Gods in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. At that time, they had used this mountain as the churning rod.] Anyone who churns this ocean and extracts the Amrit represented by Bhakti is able to partake it (just like the case of the Gods who drank the Amrit and became eternal and blissful). (Doha no. 120 Ka).

It is the Bhakti for Lord Hari (Vishnu) that protects the devotee with the help of the shield symbolized by the virtue of Vairagya, and kills his enemies represented by Mada, Lobha and Moha by using the sword of Gyan, to make him fearless. Oh Garud, think and ponder over this carefully." (Doha no. 120 Kha).]

भक्ति सुतंत्र सकल सुख खानी । बिनु सतसंग न पावहिं प्रानी ॥ ५ ॥

bhakti sutantra sakala sukha khānī. binu satasaṅga na pāvahim prānī. 5.

Bhakti is independent from all fetters; it does not depend upon any other factor to help the person who practices it to attain liberation and deliverance. In fact, Bhakti is a treasure-trove of all goodness and spiritual blessedness that gives the creature the best form of happiness and bliss.

But ‘Satsang’ (having communion with pious and holy people who have Bhakti in their hearts, who love the Lord God and find pleasure in serving the Lord and following a pious way of life) is essential to obtain Bhakti, and it is not possible otherwise. (5)

[Note—This is in consonance with the time tested adage that ‘one becomes like the company one keeps’. If a person is in constant contact with good, pious and holy people, it is natural that he would be influenced, even without any conscious effort on his part, by the lifestyle and thoughts of the latter. In due course of time, ‘Bhakti’ would come to that person naturally and on its own. He will see the positive effects of Bhakti on the person who practices it in life, and this would convince him better of its immense benefits which mere theoretical knowledge won’t do.

It is also like the case of a student learning a subject more thoroughly if he takes practical lessons under an expert teacher; mere books won’t help him.]

पुन्य पुंज बिनु मिलहिं न संता । सतसंगति संसृति कर अंता ॥ ६ ॥

pun'ya puñja binu milahim na santā. satasaṅgati sansṛti kara antā. 6.

Saints are not accessible without the good affects arising out of leading an auspicious and righteous way of life. [If a man persistently indulges in evil thoughts and leading a corrupt way of life, his sub-conscious becomes accustomed to this vile environment. Just as a man used to eating spicy and fried food will have no taste for boiled rice or plain vegetables, a sinful man has no inclination to seek the company of saints and holy people. They will talk about a way of life that will not suit him.]

Company of saints and pious people, and establishing a communion with them, brings to an end all the spiritual miseries and torments from which the Jiva suffers. This company and communion eliminates the delusions pertaining to this world and helps the Jiva to break free from the endless cycle of birth and death in this mundane and mortal world. (6)

[Note—The glory of saints and the good affects of their company have been lauded and immensely extolled in Ram Charit Manas at a number of places as follows—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 3 and Chaupai line nos. 5-12 that precede it; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 37, to Doha no. 38; (vi) Doha no. 46 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 46.

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/121/13, the crow sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu) that “there is no bigger or better source of happiness and joy than having company of saints and pious people”.

In Ram Charit Manas, 3/16/4, Lord Ram expressly tells Laxman that—“Bhakti is an entity that is most beautiful and magnificent; it is the root of all happiness and pleasures. It is obtained when saints are kind upon a person.”

In Ram Charit Manas, 3/35/8, Lord Ram stresses the importance of saints and their relationship with Bhakti when advises Sabari, while enumerating the nine forms of Bhakti to her, that—“Communion with saints and other pious people is the first form of Bhakti”.

In another of Tulsidas’ great spiritual books, known by the name of ‘Vairagya Sandipani’, the glories of saints have been expounded in verse nos. 8-33.]

पुन्य एक जग महँ नहिँ दूजा । मन क्रम बचन बिप्र पद पूजा ॥ ७ ॥

pun'ya ēka jaga mahum' nahim' dūjā. mana krama bacana bipra pada pūjā. 7.

There is no other auspicious deed that is greater than worshipping the holy feet of Dwij (Brahmins) with one’s mind, actions and words. (7)

[Note—As has been explained elsewhere, respect for a Brahmin is due to the fact that he is a learned man, well versed in the scriptures and wise enough to understand their teachings in the correct perspective. He is able implement these teachings in his own life, and therefore is the most competent Guru for the rest of the society. Of course, if a Brahmin does not live up to his expectations and cannot hold high the torch of Dharma, he is not worthy of any respect whatever. Lord Ram’s words must be interpreted in the correct context.

In Ram Charit Manas, 3/46/3, Lord Ram tells sage Narad that “Bhakti includes having affection for and showing respect to the holy feet of one’s Guru, the Lord God, and Vipra (Brahmins)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/46/3, Lord Ram tells sage Narad that “Bhakti includes having affection for and showing respect to the holy feet of one’s Guru, the Lord God, and Vipra (Brahmins)”.

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/109/11-14, Lord Shiva declares—“Service to Brahmins is the way to please the Lord God. Always treat ‘Sants’ (meaning literally ‘saints’, but here implying ‘saintly, holy and pious Brahmins’) as being equivalent to ‘Anant’ (the infinite and eternal Lord God; the Supreme Being; Lord Vishnu; the Viraat Purush). Even if a person escapes the wrath of Indra’s fierce weapon known as Vajra, of my (Shiva’s) trident, of the baton of Kaal (the God of death) and Lord Vishnu’s invincible Chakra (serrated discus)—verily I say that such a person cannot escape being burnt to ashes by the fierce wrath (curse) of Brahmins.”

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/105/5, sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that the Dwij “was merciful, had a good nature, and was a virtual treasury of righteous principles”.]

सानुकूल तेहि पर मुनि देवा । जो तजि कपटु करइ द्विज सेवा ॥ ८ ॥

sānukūla tēhi para muni dēvā. jō taji kapaṭu kara'i dvija sēvā. 8.

Sages and Gods are pleased with those who serve Dwij (Brahmins) sincerely, without any wickedness, deceit and pretensions. (8)

दो०. औरउ एक गुपुत मत सबहि कहउँ कर जोरि ।

संकर भजन बिना नर भगति न पावइ मोरि ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

aura'u ēka guputa mata sabahi kaha'um' kara jōri.
saṅkara bhajana binā nara bhagati na pāva'i mōri. 45.

There is one more secret I must tell you all with all the humility I can gather. Without adoring Lord Shiva, invoking his holy name and worshipping him earnestly, one cannot have (or expect success in having) devotion for me. (Doha no. 45)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, there are specific verses that reiterate this declaration of Lord Ram—(i) Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede this Doha no. 2

This is an important caveat included by the Lord. Earlier also, in Ram Charit Manas, 6/2/3—6/3/4, Lord Ram has asserted that he himself has the greatest respect for Lord Shiva, that if a man hopes to have devotion for the Lord (Ram) without worshipping Lord Shiva first then he goes to hell and is a complete dud, and that anyone who says that he is dear to Lord Shiva and inimical to me (Lord Ram) and vice versa then such a person goes to fall in a fierce heaven to suffer for one Kalpa (a very long period of time, equivalent to 1 day of Brahma the creator, which are equal to 432×10^7 earthly years approximately).

The context of this assertion was Lord Ram's consecration of Lord Shiva's Lingam (symbolic idol) on the shores of the ocean and worshipping Shiva before Lord Ram embarked on his mission to defeat and eliminate the cruel demons from Lanka. He decided to invoke Lord Shiva's blessings for this great enterprise.

Lord Shiva is no ordinary God; he is known as 'Mahadeva'—the great Lord God. He is also known as 'Ishan' or the symbol of Isha, the Supreme Being. He is a personified form of bliss and renunciation that comes with self-realisation, enlightenment and a constant state of Samadhi (a trance-like of transcendental existence) attained in higher reaches of meditation and contemplation. He is an embodiment of Truth and its beauty.

This exceptional adoration for Lord Shiva in the heart of Lord Ram is not unilateral, for Shiva also enshrines Lord Ram in his heart, and constantly repeats Lord Ram's holy Name, known as the 'Tarka Mantra', a spiritual formula that provides deliverance to the creature's soul from the cycle of transmigration.

These facts have been expressly and clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas at the following places in Baal Kand—

(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52 where Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Parvati or Uma that "Raghubir (Lord Ram) is my sole revered deity; I adore him as my Lord God; Lord Ram is the one who is constantly served by wise and enlightened sages and seers".

(ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19 where it is asserted that "Lord Shiva constantly repeats (does Japa) the great Mantra of Lord Ram, and uses this mystically empowered divine formula to provide Mukti (liberation and deliverance) to the dying creature at Kasi (the pilgrim city of Varanasi, which is famous as the site for cremation of the dead so that their souls find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death".

(iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19 where it is asserted that "Lord Shiva knows the immense importance of Lord Ram's holy name because it is on the strength of its life-giving and life-sustaining powers, and its ability to neutralize all the evil affects of poisons, both physical as well as symbolic, that he managed to gulp the horrible poison, known as the 'Kaal Kut', that emerged from the celestial ocean at the time of its churning in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity, by the gods and the demons in some ancient time".

(iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26 where it is declared that "It is as a divine blessing of Lord Ram's holy name that Lord Shiva is regarded as a fount and treasury of all auspiciousness and holiness inspite of his body being adorned and surrounded by unholy things (such as being covered by ash, being wrapped by coiled serpents, remaining almost naked like an

ascetic, and living in the cremation ground to do meditation and provide Mukti to dying creatures).

(v) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35 where it is said that “the divine story of Lord Ram, known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’, was first revealed in the heart of Lord Shiva”.

(vi) Chaupai line no. 36 that precedes Doha no. 1 where Tulsidas assert that “the Ram Charit Manas emerged in his own heart as a blessing of Lord Shiva”.

(vii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 50 where it is narrated how Uma, the divine consort of Shiva, was extremely perplexed when she saw that Lord Shiva had reverentially bowed his head before Lord Ram though Shiva himself is so exalted and a senior God in creation that the entire world bows its head before him.

In another great legendary narration of Lord Ram’s divine story, the famous ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ by sage Veda Vyas, the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, it is stated that after being crowned as the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram had established countless numbers of Shiva Lingams in his kingdom—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 27.]

चौ०. कहहु भगति पथ कवन प्रयासा । जोग न मख जप तप उपवासा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu bhagati patha kavana prayāsā. jōga na makha japa tapa upavāsā. 1.

Say, what effort is needed to walk on the path of Bhakti, as one need not do Yoga (meditation), Makha (or fire sacrifices; other religious duties and observances), Japa (constant repetition of any holy Mantra or spiritual formula), Tapa (austerity, penance and enduring hardships) or Upavaas (abstinence from food and drink; fasting).

[In other words, the path of Bhakti is extremely easy and simple. It does not require any special effort or incur any encumbrances on the way. It simply needs love, dedication, faith, submission, commitment and devotion for the Lord God. It is as easy as a child loving its mother. No formalities and decorum are needed.] (1)

सरल सुभाव न मन कुटिलाई । जथा लाभ संतोष सदाई ॥ २ ॥

sarala subhāva na mana kuṭilāī. jathā lābha santōṣa sadāī. 2.

[Now, Lord Ram outlines the basic qualities that one must have to develop Bhakti in his heart, and be successful in its implementation. These are general good qualities a person must have in his life, whether he wishes to have Bhakti or not, as even a cursory reading of these virtues would show that they help the person become a good human being instead of some pervert and evil creature who is no better than an animal.]

Such persons who have Bhakti must have a simple and unpretentious nature which is free from cunning, wickedness, perversions, falsehood, deceit and conceit. They are always contented with whatever they have, not greedying or yearning for more. Hence, they are always satisfied and happy. (2)

मोर दास कहाइ नर आसा । करइ तौ कहहु कहा बिस्वासा ॥ ३ ॥

mōra dāsa kahā'i nara āsā. kara'i tau kahahu kahā bisvāsā. 3.

Say, if one claims to be, on the one hand, my (Lord Ram's) devotee and says that he is dedicated to me, depends upon me, and has no one else as his Lord, but on the other hand expects something from others, or depends upon others—then how can he so claim that he is my true follower, is truly dedicated to me, has true devotion and faith in me and has submitted himself to me in the true sense?

[In other words, a true devotee of the Lord is one who does speak lie, and is completely trustworthy in all actions and words. He must be fully dedicated to the Supreme Lord, and depend upon the Lord as his sole protector and benefactor.] (3)

बहुत कहउँ का कथा बढ़ाई । एहि आचरन बस्य मैं भाई ॥ ४ ॥

bahuta kaha'um' kā kathā barhā'ī. ēhi ācarana basya mair' bhā'ī. 4.

What more can I (Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being) say; I am committed to love and protect those who have the grand eclectic virtues enumerated above. (4)

बैर न बिग्रह आस न त्रासा । सुखमय ताहि सदा सब आसा ॥ ५ ॥

baira na bigraha āsa na trāsā. sukhamaya tāhi sadā saba āsā. 5.

Such a person must not be inimical to anyone or harbour ill-will and malice towards any person in this world. He should not fight or quarrel with anyone, nor create animosity and hatred. He should not expect anything from anyone, nor should he fear them.

[Since he expects nothing from anyone, hates no one, and has no enemy in this world, it is obvious that he has nothing to fear from anybody. Since he wants nothing, there is no sense of frustration at not having been able to acquire anything, or that someone is preventing him from acquiring it, a situation that leads to jealousy and ill-will.]

For such a dispassionate, detached, enlightened and wise saint, all the directions (i.e. all the corners of the world) are equal and comfortable; they all provide him happiness and joy as he has neither any fear from any quarter nor is he jealous of the prosperity and wealth of others that may cause some degree of inferiority complex or a sense of dearth and want in him. (5)

अनारंभ अनिकेत अमानी । अनघ अरोष दच्छ बिग्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

anārambha anikēta amānī. anagha arōṣa daccha bigyānī. 6.

He does not start doing any deed with an expectation of a reward or favourable result, and hence does it with total detachment with the idea that it is his destiny that has presented itself before him in the form of the situation requiring him to do what he is doing. [And wise and enlightened as he is, he submits all the consequences of his deeds, good or bad, to the Lord God, becoming free from any mental involvement and attendant worries.]

He has no home of his own.

[Here, the reference is to the gross body which all living beings regard as their own truthful self, as well as the gross world which all living beings regard as their habitat. The secret idea is that a true saint and holy person is he who has become enlightened of the great spiritual fact that the true 'self' is the Atma, the pure cosmic Consciousness that is an ethereal, subtle and sublime entity which has no fixed abode because it is all-pervading and omnipresent in this world as the Holy Spirit. This Atma or Soul is distinct from the gross body, and since the Atma is the person's 'truthful self', he does not regard the body as his identity. Again, such a self-realised person understands that the outside world is transient and delusory, it is a creation of the mind, and it is entrapping and shackling by nature like quicksand or quagmire which sucks anyone in if one puts a leg into it even inadvertently. How can the cosmic Atma for which the whole creation is a habitat, which is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, immanent and ethereal by nature limit itself to a gross body or the gross brick-and-mortar house that ignorant people call a 'home'?)

He has no attachment or attractions for anything or anyone; he is not infatuated with them. He is immaculate and sinless. He has no anger and wrathfulness in him. He is an expert in the laws of proper conduct and well-versed in the knowledge of the Truth. He is wise, realised and enlightened. (6)

प्रीति सदा सज्जन संसर्गा । तृण सम बिषय स्वर्ग अपबर्गा ॥ ७ ॥

prīti sadā sajjana sansargā. tṛṇa sama biṣaya svarga apabargā. 7.

He finds pleasure and happiness in the company of saints, of holy and pious people. He treats all things of the material world of sense objects as being worthless as a reed or grass. For him, the heaven and the world are equal.

[This is primarily because he has realised that the ultimate spiritual truth in this creation is known as the Atma. This Atma is a cosmic ethereal entity known as Consciousness that resides in his own bosom and no where else, that it is this Atma residing in his own self which is also called the Holy Spirit, the Parmatma, the Supreme Being, whom the world calls the Lord God, and that there is no such thing as a separate heaven somewhere in the sky where he will go after death to enjoy some great privileges and physical comfort, or a distinct place called the world where he has to suffer while he lives in it. He realises that all suffering is his own creation; it is his mind that feels that this is causing pain and that is causing happiness. The heaven above is as illusory as the world under it. The reality is that when the Atma wants to find freedom from all fetters, it can do so instantly by becoming detached from everything. When the body is shed, the Atma is physically liberated from its four walls. Freedom from bondages of spiritual ignorance and delusions is the actual symbolic form of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, which gives immense happiness, joy, bliss and tranquility to the creature—a situation that is equated to being in heaven. The opposite situation would then obviously create unhappiness and misery. This is equivalent to suffering in this world.] (7)

भगति पच्छ हठ नहिं सठताई । दुष्ट तर्क सब दूरि बहाई ॥ ८ ॥

bhagati paccha haṭṭha nahim saṭṭatā'ī. duṣṭa tarka saba dūri bahā'ī. 8.

Saints prefer to follow the path of Bhakti—having love, devotion, dedication, faith and trust for the Lord God. He keeps a great distance from those who are wicked, evil and pervert, as well as from aimless debates and useless logics that make no sense and are a waste of time and energy. (8)

दो०. मम गुण ग्राम नाम रत गत ममता मद मोह ।

ता कर सुख सोइ जानइ परानंद संदोह ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

mama guna grāma nāma rata gata mamatā mada mōha.
tā kara sukha sō'i jāna'i parānanda sandōha. 46.

Only those who remain submerged in the nectar representing my countless virtues and the spiritual ambrosia of my holy name (i.e. always remember them and repeats my divine name), and are free from the entanglements of Mamta (worldly attachments and affections), the tainting effects of Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy, pride of being superior to others, ego), and the fetters of Moha (worldly attractions and infatuations)—verily, such saints know and are able to taste the divine nectar of bliss and happiness of the highest order (that comes naturally with practicing of the above eclectic virtues).” (Doha no. 46).

[Note—The glories of Lord Ram’s holy and divine name have been elaborately narrated in nearly all the magnificent devotional books on the theme of Lord Ram written by Goswami Tulsidas. A summary is as follows—

- (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 19 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 1, right upto Doha no. 27.
- (ii) Dohawali, verse nos. 1-47, 57-63, 80-81, 95-100, 102-116, 126-140, 150-152, 187.
- (iii) Barvai Ramayan, verse nos. 45-69.
- (iv) Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 1-125.
- (v) Geetawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 40, 42, 44-46.
- (vi) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 4356, 65-70.

This entire collection has been presented in English by this author in his epic book titled ‘Biography of Lord Ram and the glory of Lord’s Holy Name’, in section 2 of the book.]

चौ०. सुनत सुधासम बचन राम के । गहे सबनि पद कृपाधाम के ॥ १ ॥

caupā'ī.

sunata sudhāsama bacana rāma kē. gahē sabani pada kṛpādhāma kē. 1.

When the assembled citizens heard these nectar-like divine words from Lord Ram, all of them were overwhelmed with gratitude towards the Lord (for teaching them the path of

spiritualism that is easy as well as right and correct), and they all fell down and caught hold of his august feet. (1)

[Note—The citizens were overwhelmed by the Lord’s unpretentious and friendly nature. They were thankful to the Lord for being alert and concerned for their spiritual welfare. They paid their respects to him for the deep and insightful knowledge of the essence of the scriptures that he possessed. And they showed their willingness to follow the Lord’s advice by bowing before him and clasping his feet as a gesture of acceptance of his instructions.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 336 it is said that “Lord Ram fulfills all desires, is the most exalted amongst the learned, and is pleased by one’s sincerity and honest submissions”.

The assembled citizenry was so happy at their good fortune that they had such a caring and merciful king who was not instructing them on worldly matters of state policy to meet his political goals or to follow the edicts and laws of the kingdom mandated by their ruler, but on subjects of their spiritual welfare that would have a direct bearing on their destiny and future happiness whether or not they remain in his kingdom or migrate somewhere else.

All classes of citizens of all ages were present in this meeting. The Lord had used the universal form of address for all of them by calling them ‘Bhai’ or brother (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43 above). Each individual had a different level of relationship with the Lord—some treated him as their Lord, some as friend, others as their de-facto parent, still others as their Guru, and so on. This is why the Lord used the equalizing term of ‘brother’ for them. In Lord Ram’s eyes, all of them were equal if they loved him, had devotion for him and were determined to follow the path shown by him; all such people are very dear to the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130. This fact is clearly declared by the people themselves below in the next line no. 2.

Therefore, all of them showed their combined respect to him and vowed their allegiance to the Lord by bowing and clasping his holy feet in a gesture to reiterate their faith in him and obedience to him.]

जननि जनक गुर बंधु हमारे । कृपा निधान प्रान ते प्यारे ॥ २ ॥

janani janaka gura bandhu hamārē. kṛpā nidhāna prāna tē pyārē. 2.

The merciful Lord is like our mother, father, guru and friend. He is dearer to us than our own lives. (2)

[Note—Refer note of line no. 1 above.]

तनु धनु धाम राम हितकारी । सब बिधि तुम्ह प्रनतारति हारी ॥ ३ ॥

tanu dhanu dhāma rāma hitakārī. saba bidhi tumha pranatārati hārī. 3.

Oh Lord Ram who eliminates the miseries, grief and torments of those who have taken refuge with you (‘Prantaarati Haari’). For us, you are everything in this world; you are our body, wealth and home. In other words, you are very precious for us; we value you like we value our possessions such as our bodies, our wealth and our homesteads.

[There is another way of interpreting this verse. It can read as follows—“Oh Lord Ram. You are our well-wisher; you take care of us and ensure our spiritual welfare like we ensure the safety of our own worldly possessions such as our bodies, our wealth and

our homes. Indeed Lord, you are the one who eliminates all the worries and fears of those who come to take your refuge.”] (3)

[Note—The fact that Lord Ram is a selfless helper and provider of care and welfare to all in this world is emphasized in Ram Charit Manas, 7/47/5. This line appears below.]

असि सिख तुम्ह बिनु देइ न कोऊ । मातु पिता स्वारथ रत ओऊ ॥ ४ ॥

asi sikha tumha binu dē'i na kō'ū. mātu pitā svāratha rata ō'ū. 4.

No one will give us such a wise and selfless spiritual advice (that is for our welfare), except you. Even our parents, the mother and the father, are selfish as all have some sort of personal interest vested in us. (4)

[Note—The parents are interested in their off-spring because he or she would take care of them in their old age and carry forward their family line. If the son does not live up to his expectations, the father often disinherits him. No father will advise his son to become a monk and renounce everything worldly. He will instead want that his son earn a livelihood and carry on with his family business, profession or vocation.

This fact that even the parents are selfish is reiterated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 99 which says “the mother and the father call their children and teach them such things by which they learn to fill their stomachs (i.e. they teach them the method to earn a livelihood)”.

This idea is further stressed in the following line no. 6 below (i.e. 7/47/6).

Vinai Patrika, one of the most magnificent book of prayers ever written, has this idea expressed in its verse nos. 199 and 243 that all relationships in this world revolve around fulfillment of selfish interests, and it is only Lord Ram who helps others and thinks for their long-term good and well-being selflessly.

But Lord Ram has not uttered a single word relating to worldly affairs during his discourse here. He is only concerned about the spiritual welfare and good destiny of the people.]

हेतु रहित जग जुग उपकारी । तुम्ह तुम्हार सेवक असुरारी ॥ ५ ॥

hētu rahita jaga juga upakārī. tumha tumhāra sēvaka asurārī. 5.

Oh Lord who eliminates the demons*!

You are a selfless provider of good to the whole world in all planes of time; you take care of the welfare and well-being of the entire creation in a selfless way at all times#.

For your devotees and followers who diligently serve you (i.e. worship you, are devoted and dedicated to you, and who have no one other than you in this world), you are like the Lord who slays the demons*. (5)

[Note—*Here, the word ‘demon’ has subtle nuances—it refers to the evil nature and sinful tendencies, the inauspicious qualities and negative traits that live inside the bosom of a creature. These unholy factors act as taints on the otherwise holy and immaculate nature of the Atma of the creature. The merciful Lord strives to remove the many evil qualities that a creature harbours inside him which act as impediments for his spiritual welfare. The Atma becomes a virtual slave

to the countless negative qualities present in a creature. Elimination of all the vices and sinful characters of a creature is tantamount to slaying the demons inside him as they all make the creature behave and think like a demon. This helps the Atma of the creature to find its freedom from their shackling effects, leading to its liberation and deliverance. By the removal of these negative and inauspicious qualities from a creature, the Lord ensures that he attains happiness and peace which had eluded him so far. The slaying of the demons or eliminating them is a metaphoric way of saying all this.

The countless negative traits present in a living being, the Jiva, are metaphorically regarded as demons because like the demon who finds pleasure in tormenting this world they too derive satisfaction in causing immense suffering for the concerned Jiva as well as for those who come in contact with such a Jiva.

Tulsidas' 'Vinai Patrika' has a magnificent verse no. 58 in which this metaphor of the demon is used to represent so many evil qualities present in a person. It says that such negatives as Kaam (passions; lust), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance), Lobha (greed), Moha (attachments), Maya (delusions), Ahankar (pride, vanity) etc. are like the many demons such as Meghnaad who were killed by Lord Ram during the epic war at Lanka.

#This fact that Lord Ram is a selfless provider of good and welfare to all in this world is reiterated elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, in 3/46/7 it is said that "he always endeavours for the welfare and good of others without having any sort of selfish interest or motivation in it".]

स्वारथ मीत सकल जग माहीं । सपनेहुँ प्रभु परमारथ नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

svāratha mīta sakala jaga māhīm. sapanēhum' prabhu paramāratha nāhīm. 6.

Everyone is driven or motivated by some or the other kind of selfishness or self-interest. Everyone is a friend or interested in anybody because of some kind of self-interest involved in this relationship of friendship. [Self-interest is an overriding factor that governs all deeds, actions, relationships, interactions, behaviour, thoughts and dealings in this world.]

No one is concerned about the spiritual welfare, well-being and good of the other person; no one is bothered about the destiny of others except how it affects his own interests.' (6)

[Note—In other words, the citizens tell Lord Ram that it is only the Lord who talks about the security and good of their spiritual destiny, about the welfare of their Atma. All the rest of the world, even their own parents, their Gurus and their friends who are supposed to be very close to them and are expected to act in a way that is best for them, are not interested in spiritual welfare, for all of them have their own axes to grind.]

As long as their self-interests are served and desires fulfilled, as long as the Jiva is able to serve them and help them succeed in their own plan of things, these parents, Gurus or friends treat the Jiva nicely. But as soon as the Jiva begins to think independently for his own welfare and chalk out a plan to reach the goal in life that he sets for himself that clashes with that of the others, the same persons become inimical to him.]

सब के बचन प्रेम रस साने । सुनि रघुनाथ हृदयँ हरषाने ॥ ७ ॥

saba kē bacana prēma rasa sānē. suni raghunātha hṛdayam' haraṣānē. 7.

Lord Ram (Raghunath) became very pleased in his heart when he heard these words of affection from all those citizens assembled there. (7)

[Note—Lord Ram felt glad that the people have understood him properly and in the correct perspective. Earlier, in Chaupai line no. 4 that preceded Doha no. 43 the Lord had politely told the assembly, at the beginning of the discourse, that if they do not agree with him they are free to do what they think; he is not imposing his will on them. Then once again, in line no. 6 he said that if they think he is wrong then they should not fear him and frankly tell him about their reservations.

Now when the Lord saw that all the people agreed with him, it is natural for him to feel pleased. His aim was to show the citizens the correct spiritual path and to teach them on principles of Dharma, and now that they have agreed to follow his instructions and praised the Lord for telling them many things they weren't aware of, expressing their gratitude to the Lord for it, it is natural that the Lord will feel happy and satisfied.]

निज निज गृह गए आयसु पाई । बरनत प्रभु बतकही सुहाई ॥ ८ ॥

nija nija gr̥ha ga'e āyasu pā'ī. baranata prabhu batakahī suhā'ī. 8.

After that, all the people took the Lord's permission and went their way to their respective homes, praising the pleasant and sweet words of the Lord and discussing them amongst themselves on the way. (8)

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Canto 1.11

Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86, till Doha no. 87 Kha in which Lord Ram has taught the crow-saint Kaagbhusund the importance of having 'Bhakti' (devotion, dedication, faith, submission and worship) for the Supreme Lord.

The crow-saint Kaagbhusund had gone to Lord Ram when the Lord was a child, and used to play around with him in the royal courtyard. Since Kaagbhusund was in the physical form of a crow (a form that he had received as a result of a previous curse for insulting his Guru in his previous birth), no one had an inkling of his true identity, and therefore he was given unhindered access to be very close to the Lord and enjoy his company for a long period of time. The crow hopped around merrily in the ground of the palace, chasing, running away and in general frolicking around along with the child Lord Ram who would reciprocate the saint's devotion for the Lord by playing with him like an ordinary child so that no one would suspect anything. In this it is obvious that Kaagbhusund was exceptionally lucky and privileged in as much as he got the rarest of rare privilege to stay in so close proximity with the Supreme Being and enjoy the Lord's love and affection which even the greatest of saints and sages would have willingly sacrificed their lives to get.

At the culmination of this communion, the saint asked the Lord to bless him with his Bhakti. Lord Ram was very pleased with him and granted Kaagbhusund his eternal devotion and love. It was on this occasion that Lord Ram preached Kaagbhusund the

eclectic principles of Bhakti, its importance and import for the creature's spiritual welfare, and how it differs from and why is it superior to other means for attaining liberation and deliverance for the soul.

चौ०. अब सुनु परम बिमल मम बानी । सत्य सुगम निगमादि बखानी ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

aba sunu parama bimala mama bānī. satya sugama nigamādi bakhānī. 1.

Lord Ram said to sage Kaagbhusund—‘Now, listen to my sacred (holy and divine) words which are truthful, easy to understand, in consonance with and echoing the eclectic principles laid out by the Vedas, Purans etc. (‘Nigamaadi’). (1)

[Note—Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and hence his words can't be anything other than holy, divine, sacred and truthful.

The scriptures are very voluminous, complicated and labyrinthine; highly erudite and learned sages and seers have spent their entire lifetimes trying to read them fully, understand them and decipher their teachings. They are thus beyond the means and reach and understanding and practical use for the ordinary creature. This problem was realised by the Supreme Lord, so he decided to make them easy to understand for the common person and present their essential teachings in simple and straightforward language.]

निज सिद्धांत सुनावउँ तोही । सुनु मन धरु सब तजि भजु मोही ॥ २ ॥
nija sid'dhānta sunāva'um' tōhī. sunu mana dharu saba taji bhaju mōhī. 2.

I shall tell you the fundamental principles as concluded by me (i.e. as deduced, determined and decided by me, the Supreme Being who has created these scriptures, and therefore what I say is the final word on their teachings).

Listen carefully and enshrine them in your heart and mind. Discard everything else, and worship me, have unwavering devotion for me, be dedicated to me, and inculcate faith and love for me (as a sure-shot means for your spiritual well-being, welfare and good).

[That is, always remember what I tell you now. Imprint my sacred words firmly and indelibly in your sub-conscious. Make a firm resolution that they will invariably act as your moral guide, advisor and teacher in all the decisions your mind and heart make while dealing with all imaginable and all the variable aspects of life. If you follow me closely and implement my teachings, you will not have to look any further for spiritual and moral guidance and advice.] (2)

मम माया संभव संसारा । जीव चराचर बिबिधि प्रकारा ॥ ३ ॥
mama māyā sambhava sansārā. jīva carācara bibidhi prakārā. 3.

This creation is the result of my Maya (delusion creating powers). This creation has countless varieties of Jivas (living beings), such as those that are mobile ('Char) and those that are immobile ('Achar'). (3)

[Note—This creation is created by the supreme Brahm using his delusion-creating powers. For this purpose, Brahm has employed three basic Gunas or qualities in creation—the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna. Hence, this Maya is also known as 'Trigunmai Maya' or a Maya that has three-components. This esoteric concept has been explained in a note that accompanies Doha no. 41 of Uttar Kand above.

The living world has both types of living beings—those who can move, for instance the members of the animal kingdom who are studied under the zoological stream in modern science, and those who can't move, such as the members of the plant kingdom who are studied under the botanical stream.]

सब मम प्रिय सब मम उपजाए । सब ते अधिक मनुज मोहि भाए ॥ ४ ॥

saba mama priya saba mama upajā'ē. saba tē adhika manuja mōhi bhā'ē. 4.

All of them are equally dear to me, and all of them have been created by me (or born out of me as my image). But out of all of them, those who are born as human beings are comparatively dearer to me. (4)

[Note—This idea has been reiterated elsewhere by Lord Ram—viz. Ram Charit Manas: (i) 7/43/7 when the Lord had taught the citizens of Ayodhya he has said exactly the same thing. (ii) 7/87/6-8 below where Lord Ram reasserts this fact to sage Kaagbhusund as stated in the present line.

Why so? This question has been answered by Kaagbhusund himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 121. He tells Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu who had come seeking knowledge to the saint) that—"There is no other form (body) that is as good and desirable as the body of the human being. All the creatures of this world consisting of inanimate as well as animate things yearn to acquire it. The human body is the stepping stone to attain both the heaven as well as the hell. It is also the mean by which a creature can hope to find his final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration in this world. It also grants Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti. {That is, the Jiva can obtain these three fruits of truthful spiritual knowledge as enshrined in the scriptures, practice the eclectic virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, as well as devotion, dedication and submission for the Lord God through the medium of the human body.} If a Jiva is stupid enough not to properly use this golden opportunity to worship the Supreme Being and have devotion for the Lord to ensure their secure destiny and spiritual well-being then they are like the idiot who throws a precious gem to grab a worthless piece of glass."

Lord Ram has told Hanuman that though he is neutral towards all in this creation, but still he has a soft corner for his devotees—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 4/3/8.]

तिन्ह महँ द्विज द्विज महँ श्रुतिधारी । तिन्ह महँ निगम धरम अनुसारी ॥ ५ ॥

tinha maham' dvija dvija maham' śrutidhārī. tinha mahum' nigama dharama anusārī. 5.

[All humans are not the same. The Lord does not mean that he loves sinners and vile persons simply because they are ‘humans’. Its nonsense! So he elaborates further—]

Amongst the humans, I favour and hold dear the Dwijs (Brahmins). Even amongst them I favour and hold dear those who are expert in the knowledge of the Vedas.

Out of them, those who practice the teaching of these sacred scriptures in their own lives, those who lead a life according to the tenets of Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, morality, spirituality etc. as universally taught by all the scriptures), are more favoured by me and dearer to me.

[That is, though all elderly and learned Brahmins are favoured by me, but I prefer those who have an in-depth understanding of the essential meaning and teaching of the scriptures, who implement these teachings in their own lives, who are competent and selfless enough to show the rest of the society the path of Dharma by teaching others their essence in simple language, and in general act as torch-bearers of the sacred knowledge enshrined in the scriptures. I do not mean that I prefer any Brahmin because he is born in that race. Learning the scriptures does not mean memorizing them by rote-learning because it is as good as not knowing them at all.] (5)

तिन्ह महँ प्रिय बिरक्त पुनि ग्यानी । ग्यानिहु ते अति प्रिय बिग्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

tinha maham̐ priya birakta puni gyānī. gyānihu tē ati priya bigyānī. 6.

Out of them (i.e. those who have studied the scriptures and have an in-depth knowledge of their meaning), I prefer those who are ‘Virakta’—i.e. those who have developed the eclectic spiritual virtue of ‘Vairagya’. That is, I prefer those people amongst the learned Brahmins who have developed a sincere and honest sense of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and neutrality towards everything in the world, including their own gross body and its countless pleasures, as well as the external world of material sense objects and their infinite temptations.

[What is the use of understanding the meaning of the scriptures if a man remains hankering for worldly gains and pecuniary objects? The scriptures tell him, inter alia, that everything in this world is perishable, that the only imperishable entity here is the Atma, the pure consciousness trapped in a gross body due to its past deeds, that true happiness and peace comes when this Atma is freed from this tangle, and that the world is like a spider’s web which keeps the Atma trapped like the insect caught in this web and fed upon by the spider. The learned Brahmin preaches others this fact but himself yearns for all the things that the scriptures prohibit and which he himself tells other from a pseudo moral ground. Indeed he is a pretentious man, and therefore the Lord does not like him.]

Even amongst the Viraktas, I prefer those who are ‘Gyanis’—i.e. who are wise, and have become enlightened and self-realised.

[Only those who have developed true realisation and enlightenment will be able to remain steady on the path of Vairagya or Virakti. The rest are prone to falter and fall by the wayside in the face of fierce and relentless onslaught of the world and its temptations.] (6)

तिन्ह ते पुनि मोहि प्रिय निज दासा । जेहि गति मोरि न दूसरि आसा ॥ ७ ॥

tinha tē puni mōhi priya nija dāsā. jēhi gati mōri na dūsari āsā. 7.

[Having stressed the importance of Viragya and Gyan in the path of spiritual destiny, the Lord now lays stress on the virtue and glory of Bhakti, the eclectic virtues of devotion, dedication, submission, faith and love for the Lord God by saying that out of all the learned, wise and enlightened ones, he prefers those who have become his true followers, who serve the Lord selflessly and sincerely.]

Out of them (i.e. out of those who are Gyanis as mentioned in line no. 6 above), I prefer those who serve me, for whom there is no other succour and solace, no other destiny and destination, and no other hope and help except me.

[That is, I have a special soft corner in my heart for those wise ones who are completely and unequivocally dependent upon me, and have submitted themselves whole-heartedly before me.] (7)

[Note—The same emotion is expressed by Lord Ram when Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, had come to seek the Lord's refuge and protection—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 5/48/1-8—5/48. Here, Lord Ram has especially invoked Kaagbhusund to say that anyone who comes seeking his refuge after abandoning all hopes from any other quarter, then he is hereby assured by the Lord that he is most welcome—refer: 5/48/1.

Sage Valmiki has also reiterated this virtue of total submission, faith, devotion and love for Lord Ram, being completely dependent upon the Lord for all the needs, both the spiritual as well as the temporal, and having no expectations of any kind from any other quarter in this world as a pre-requisite for the Lord being especially gracious upon a spiritual aspirant—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/129/4-6; 2/129; 2/130; 2/131.

In Ram Charit Manas, 7/46/3-4 where Lord Ram tells the citizens of Ayodhya that if a person claims to be his follower and dependant but looks elsewhere for help, say obviously then how he can claim it to be so: he is a liar, a pretentious man who is not telling the truth. Then the Lord asserts that he is easily pleased and feel obliged to a person who is really dependent upon him completely.]

पुनि पुनि सत्य कहउँ तोहि पाहीं । मोहि सेवक सम प्रिय कोउ नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

puni puni satya kaha'um' tōhi pāhīm. mōhi sēvaka sama priya kō'u nāhīm. 8.

[In this line, the Lord repeats his declaration that he loves his devotees over all others to remove any confusions and doubts, as well as to stress this point.]

I repeatedly and truthfully (honestly, sincerely) say to you that no one is as dear to me as my devotee and those who serve me. (8).

[Note—The Lord has made a similar assertion earlier when the citizens had assembled to hear him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43.

Now, this statement of Lord Ram that he gives special preference to those who serve him, must not be misconstrued to mean that he is acting arrogantly and preaching slavery. Not at all! Remember, he has reiterated in an open court when all the citizens had assembled to hear him that they should have no fear of him and are free to oppose him if they think that the Lord is saying anything wrong, improper, unholy or unrighteous—i.e. anything that goes against the principles of Dharma and the doctrines and teachings of the scriptures (refer: Ram Charit Manas, 7/43/6), that after listening to him there are free to decide what to do and what not to do (refer: Ram

Charit Manas, 7/43/4), and that all of them are like his brothers (refer: Ram Charit Manas, 7/43/6, 7/45/2, 7/46/4).]

भगति हीन बिरंछि किन होई । सब जीवहु सम प्रिय मोहि सोई ॥ ९ ॥

bhagati hīna biran̄ci kina hō'ī. saba jīvahu sama priya mōhi sō'ī. 9.

[Laying more stress of the grand virtue of Bhakti, the Lord continues—]

Even if someone as exalted and senior in creation as the creator Brahma himself lacks the divine virtue of Bhakti in him, then he is like all other ordinary Jivas (living beings) for me.

[That is, even Brahma, the creator, is like other ordinary beings for me if he lacks devotion and faith in me. I will continue to love him and take care of him in the routine way I take care and look after the rest of the creation, but he cannot expect me to show any special privilege to him or come to his rescue when he is surrounded by horrendous misfortunes howling like hungry bloodhounds baying for his blood.] (9)

[Note—Compare this line with the previous Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 86 of Uttar Kand in Ram Charit Manas. This comparison clearly indicate what the Lord means to say—it is that he takes care of the entire creation in a dispassionate manner like an emperor should without any prejudice or a partisan attitude. But like the emperor who is more concerned about those who attend to him closely, I too, being the Supreme Emperor, cannot neglect those who have complete devotion for me, who serve me diligently, faithfully and whole-heartedly. It does not mean I am biased; but tell me would it not be unfair to them if I do not give them any privilege or advantage over others who are not so loyal to me and who keep a distance from me. Remember—I won't neglect them; don't misunderstand me. I am duty-bound to take care of all of them—I have vowed it (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 7; and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 86).]

भगतिवंत अति नीचउ प्रानी । मोहि प्रानप्रिय असि मम बानी ॥ १० ॥

bhagativanta ati nīca'u prānī. mōhi prānapriya asi mama bānī. 10.

I tell you, truthfully, that if a creature has devotion for me and complete faith in me, then I love him like my life even though he may be most lowly and downtrodden in the hierarchy of creation. (10)

[Note—This is an important observation. All those who were fortunate enough to be graced by Lord Ram in the story of the Ramayana were low down in social and evolutionary hierarchy. Let us see who they are—

(i) The vulture Jatau who was picked up the Lord onto his laps and his last rites (cremation) was done by the Lord himself—something his own father king Dasrath was denied—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 3/30—3/32/1, 3/33/2.

(ii) Then there was Sabari, a woman who was born in a low caste and excommunicated by the society. The Lord cheerfully ate fruits offered by her, preached her, and then gave her emancipation and salvation—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 3/36. Here also, when she expressed her dilemma and extreme sense of regret that she is feeling reluctant or afraid to serve the Lord as she belonged to a low caste which forbids such service, and this will prevent her from fulfilling her

life-long desire to serve the Lord when he arrived at her hermitage, the Lord told her that he respects only Bhakti as the only condition to accept anyone, and since she has this in abundance he is most willing to accept her hospitality—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 3/35/1-6, and 3/36/7.

(iii) Nishad was a boatman, but the Lord accepted him as his friend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 2/104; 7/20/3.

(iv) Other shining examples are the monkeys such as Sugriv, the monkey king, whom also the Lord accepted as his friend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 4/4; 4/5/1; 4/5.

Then we have Hanuman, his most trusted devotee whom the Lord had affectionately embraced on more than one occasion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 4/3/6; 4/33/4; 6/62/1.

Lord Ram has proclaimed that Hanuman was dearer to him as compared to even his closest brother Laxman who had suffered the torments of the forest along with the Lord shoulder-to-shoulder—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 4/3/7.

Hanuman had risen above the rest of them all to the exalted stature in as much as that the Lord declared him to be his son towards whom he will always be indebted—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 532/5-7.

(v) Vibhishan, the demon brother of Ravana, the demon king, was also accepted by the Lord as his friend whom the Lord embraced affectionately—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 4/46/1-2; 4/48/1; 4/49/9 etc.

Not privately, but the Lord had declared them to be his dear friends without whose support he would not have defeated the fierce enemy, the demons, openly before the huge crowd that had gathered to greet and welcome Lord Ram when he returned to Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 7/8/5-8.]

{The summary of what the Lord said till now is this--“All the creatures in this world have been created by me (the Supreme Being known as Ram). I love them equally as all of them are my off-springs. Out of them, I love the humans more. Out of them, I prefer Dwij (Brahmins); out of them I prefer those who are well versed in the Vedas; out of such Brahmins I prefer those who actually follow the teachings of the Vedas (instead of just muttering their hymns and incantations); out of such Brahmins I prefer those who have developed Vairagya or renunciation and dispassion; out of them I prefer those who have gained ‘Gyan’ (knowledge of spiritual matters and having wisdom); out of such people I prefer those who have ‘Vigyan’ (an in-depth clinical knowledge of spiritual matters, leading to self-realisation and enlightenment); and out of them I prefer those who are my ardent followers and are totally dependent upon me, for whom I am the only destination and refuge, the only source of succour and solace, and the only source of help and happiness. Even Brahma, the creator, is equal to an ordinary being for me if he has no Bhakti (devotion), while the humblest and lowly of all the creatures is dearest to me and closest to my heart if he has Bhakti in him.”}

दो०. सुचि सुसील सेवक सुमति प्रिय कहु काहि न लाग ।

श्रुति पुरान कह नीति असि सावधान सुनु काग ॥ ८६ ॥

dōhā.

suci susīla sēvaka sumati priya kahu kāhi na lāga.
śruti purāna kaha nīti asi sāvadhāna sunu kāga. 86.

Say, who does not like or favours a server or follower or subordinate who is of a pure heart, who is polite and courteous, and who is wise and intelligent.

[Lord Ram here justifies his earlier assertion that he has special place in his heart for his ardent devotees and followers. He puts a poser to those who may question the Lord's declaration—saying in essence “Tell me, what will you do in my place? How do you intend to treat someone who is loyal, faithful and totally devoted to you; who will lay down his life for you or your cause; who is completely dependent upon you?”]

Listen crow (i.e. sage Kaagbhusund)! All the great scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans affirm this principle (which I have just narrated to you). (Doha no. 86)

चौ०. एक पिता के बिपुल कुमारा । होहिं पृथक गुन सील अचारा ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

ēka pitā kē bipula kumārā. hōhim pr̥thaka guna sīla acārā. 1.

[Now, the Lord takes a simple example to bring home the point why he favours his ardent and faithful devotees as compared to other creatures inspite of the fact that all of them are his off-springs—]

Suppose a father has many sons. All of them have different qualifications and qualities, differing in nature, virtues, behaviour and attitude. (1)

कोउ पंडित कोउ तापस ग्याता । कोउ धनवंत सूर कोउ दाता ॥ २ ॥
kō'u paṇḍita kō'u tāpasa gyātā. kō'u dhanavanta sūra kō'u dātā. 2.

One of them may be a Pandit (an expert in any vocation or profession or knowledge of the scriptures), another may be good at doing Tapa (practicing the principles of austerity, penance and suffering for some good cause), the third may be rich, the fourth may be physically strong and a brave warrior, and the fifth may be a renowned philanthropic who is known for his charitable disposition and a magnanimous attitude as a liberal donor and alms giver. (2)

कोउ सर्बग्य धर्मरत कोई । सब पर पितहि प्रीति सम होई ॥ ३ ॥
kō'u sarbagya dharmarata kōī. saba para pitahi prīti sama hōī. 3.

One of his sons may be so mystically empowered and powerful that nothing is secret from him or unknown to him. The other son may be exalted as he diligently follows the principles of Dharma.

The father will love all of them equally and treat all of them equally. All of them have auspicious qualities that give good name to the father and the family. The father is happy with all of them, and blesses all of them. (3)

कोउ पितु भगत बचन मन कर्मा । सपनेहुँ जान न दूसर धर्मा ॥ ४ ॥

kō'u pitu bhagata bacana mana karmā. sapanēhum^ṛ jāna na dūsara dharmā. 4.

Now, suppose he has a son who is completely devoted to his father so much so that he serves him with his words, actions and deeds. This particular son knows of no other Dharma (good deed) that is greater or better than serving his father loyally, faithfully, diligently, truthfully, sincerely, honestly, and exclusively.

[That is, this son is exceptionally obedient to his father. He treats his father as being equivalent to God. He is at the beck and call of the father, and is eagerly waiting for the father to ask him to do something which he willingly rushes to do to the best of his ability. He never murmurs or swears or grudges or tries to avoid attending to the needs of his beloved father. He does never use any word that might hurt his father in the least; he is eager to carry out his instructions cheerfully; he thinks that he is serving his Lord God by serving the father.] (4)

सो सुत प्रिय पितु प्रान समाना । जद्यपि सो सब भाँति अयाना ॥ ५ ॥

sō suta priya pitu prāna samānā. jadyapi sō saba bhāmṭi ayānā. 5.

This particular son is exceedingly dear to the father even though he might lack in other qualities enumerated above (in line nos. 1-3).

[Say, will he not be the most favoured son of the father; should the father not love him most dearly?] (5)

एहि बिधि जीव चराचर जेते । त्रिजग देव नर असुर समेते ॥ ६ ॥

अखिल बिस्व यह मोर उपाया । सब पर मोहि बराबरि दाया ॥ ७ ॥

ēhi bidhi jīva carācara jētē. trijaga dēva nara asura samētē. 6.

akhila bisva yaha mōra upāyā. saba para mōhi barābari dāyā. 7.

In a similar way, this entire creation consisting of animate as well as inanimate creatures—including the animals and birds ('Trijag'), the gods ('Deva'), the humans ('Nar') and the demons ('Asur') [6]—has been created by me; all of them are my offsprings. I have equal mercy and grace upon all of them [7]. (6-7).

[Note—Refer the same declaration of the Lord earlier in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 86 above.]

तिन्ह महुँ जो परिहरि मद माया । भजै मोहि मन बच अरु काया ॥ ८ ॥

tinha maham^ṛ jō parihari mada māyā. bhajai mōhi mana baca aru kāyā. 8.

Amongst all the creatures, they who abandon all sorts of negativity such as Mada (arrogance, haughtiness and ego) as well as Maya (delusions and their attendant deceit, pretensions and falsehoods), and instead develop the spiritual virtue of having sincere and true devotion, love, affection and faith in me—(8)

दो०. पुरुष नपुंसक नारि वा जीव चराचर कोइ ।

सर्व भाव भज कपट तजि मोहि परम प्रिय सोइ ॥ ८७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

puruṣa napunsaka nāri vā jīva carācara kō'i.

sarba bhāva bhaja kapaṭa taji mōhi parama priya sō'i. 87 (a).

—Verily I declare that no matter which form of birth they have got in this world, to whichever denomination in the hierarchy of creation they belong, be it as a man, an impotent person, a woman, or any other Jiva (creature), whether one who has mobility (such as animals and birds) or one who can't move (such as plants or lower members of the animal kingdom)—I love them most dearly if they have no wickedness, pretensions or deceit in their mind and heart, and honestly worship me with utmost faith, are truly dedicated to me, and have an unflinching and single-minded devotion for me. (Doha no. 87 Ka).

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Section 2

Adhyatma Ramayan

The ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ was written by sage Veda Vyas who was also the classifier of the Vedas, and the author of the Purans. It was he who had extracted the philosophical parts of the Vedas and arranged them as the magnificent treatises on metaphysics, spiritualism and theology known as the divine Upanishads.

This version of the legendary divine story of the Supreme Being in the human form as Lord Ram is part of Brahaamand Puran, Uttar Khand.

Lord Ram has preached or taught on several occasion in this magnificent book, and the stress is on metaphysics.

In this section we will read all those divine and auspicious teachings of the Lord in his own holy words. They are all brought together at one place in this book titled “Ram Geeta” for the spiritual welfare of the seeker.

(2.1) Ayodhya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 17-47. Here, Lord Ram has taught Laxman, his younger brother.

(2.2) Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 16-55. Here again, Lord Ram has taught Laxman.

(2.3) Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 20-32. Here, Lord Ram has taught Sabari, the low-caste woman whom the Lord met in the dense forest.

(2.4) Kishkindha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-35. Here, Lord Ram has taught Tara, the wife of Baali, the king of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, who was the elder brother of Sugriv.

(2.5) Kishkindha Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 6-41. Here, Lord Ram has once again taught Laxman.

(2.6) Uttar Kand, Canto 5. This entire Canto comes under our subject of Ram Geeta as Lord Ram has elaborately preached Laxman about many esoteric principles of metaphysics, spiritualism and theology.

(2.7) Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 58-82. Here, Lord Ram has taught his mother Kaushalya before winding up his worldly affairs and reverting back into his cosmic form as the Viraat Purush.

Now, we shall read these teachings of Lord Ram, known as the “Ram Geeta”, or the divine Song of the Lord, in detail.

Canto 2.1

Ayodhya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 17-47. Here, Lord Ram has taught Laxman, his younger brother.

Lord Ram was getting ready to go to the forest to fulfill his father's promises made to his step-mother Kaikeyi. Laxman, the Lord's younger brother, was extremely peeved at this injustice being perpetrated in the name of upholding one's words made to a wicked woman like Kaikeyi, and wished to wreak vengeance upon his father. It was then that Lord Ram intervened and calmed him down, using this opportunity to preach upon the grand philosophy of the Upanishads that are collectively called metaphysics, theology and spiritualism.

धनुष्पाणिरहं तत्र निहन्यां विघ्नकारिणः। इति ब्रुवन्तं सौमित्रिमालिङ्ग्य रघुनन्दनः॥ १७॥
शूरोऽसि रघुशार्दूल ममात्यन्तहिते रतः। जानामि सर्वं ते सत्यं किन्तु तत्समयो न हि॥ १८॥

dhanuṣpāṇirahaṃ tatra nihanyaṃ vighnakāriṇaḥ /
iti bruvantaṃ saumitrimāliṅgya raghunandanaḥ // 17
śūro'si raghuśārdūla mamātyantahite rataḥ /
jānāmi sarvaṃ te satyaṃ kintu tatsamayo na hi // 18

17-18. I shall kill all those, with a bow and arrow in my hands, who ever try to cause (or create) any hurdles in it (i.e. your anointment)'. When Laxman had contemptuously said so, Raghunandan (Sri Ram) clasped him to his bosom and said to pacify him (17), 'You are like a tiger in the Raghu's clan! You are very valorous and brave, and my greatest well-wisher. Whatever you say I know is true, but this is not the proper time for it (18).

यदिदं दृश्यते सर्वं राज्यं देहादिकं च यत्। यदि सत्यं भवेत्तत्र आयासः सफलश्च ते॥ १९॥
भोगा मेघवितानस्थविद्युल्लेखेव चञ्चलाः। आयुरप्यग्निसनतप्तलोहस्थजलबिन्दुवत् ॥२०॥
यथा व्यालगलस्थोऽपि भेको दंशानपेक्षते। तथा कालहिना ग्रस्तो लोको भोगानशाश्वतान्॥ २१॥

yadidaṃ dr̥śyate sarvaṃ rājyaṃ dehādikaṃ ca yat /
yadi satyaṃ bhavettatra āyāsaḥ saphalaśca te // 19
bhogā meghavitānasthavidyullekheva cañcalāḥ /
āyurapyagnisantaptalohasthajalabinduvat // 20
yathā vyālagalastho'pi bheko daṁśānapekṣate /
tathā kālāhinā grasto loko bhogānaśāśvatān // 21

19-21. Your efforts would have been truly successful if this kingdom and the body etc., which are visible, had been true (19).

But these comforts (enjoyments) of the world are like the transient and temporary lightening in the tent of (i.e. canopy, cover, shade represented by) the clouds, whereas life is as momentary as a drop of water on a piece of iron made red hot with fire (20).

Even as a frog greedily looks at a fly while itself lying in the mouth of a snake (who is ready to gobble it up, i.e. it is on the verge of death itself), the people too yearn rapaciously for the perishable, transient and temporary comforts and pleasures of this mundane, deluding world inspite of being regularly devoured by the serpent represented by Kaal (death) (21).

करोति दुःखेन हि कर्मतन्त्रं शरीरभोगार्थमहर्निशं नरः।

देहस्तु भिन्नः पुरुषात्समीक्ष्यते को वात्र भोगः पुरुषेण भुज्यते॥२२॥

पितृमातृसुतभ्रातृदारबन्धवादिसङ्गमः । प्रपायामिव जन्तूनां नद्यां काष्ठौघवच्चलः॥ २३॥

karoti duḥkhena hi karmatantram śarīrabhogārthamaharniśaṃ naraḥ /
dehastu bhinnāḥ puruṣātsamīkṣyate ko vātra bhogaḥ puruṣeṇa bhujyate // 22
pitṛmātr̥sutabhrātr̥dārabandhavādīsaṅgamaḥ /
prapāyāmiva jantūnāṃ nadyāṃ kāṣṭhaughavaccalaḥ // 23

22-23. What a surprise that a man suffers so much and indulges in various deeds and actions day and night just for the pleasures of the sense organs of this body. If he simply realises and understands that this body is different (i.e. a separate entity) from the soul (Atma) which is his truthful identity, then, say, how can he derive any enjoyment or pleasure from it? (22).

The contact or relationships that one has with one's father, mother, son, brother, wife, kin, relatives and friends are like those who assemble to drink water at a water-hut, and are as temporary, illusive, transient or coincidental as a collection of sticks wobbling and tossing about wildly in the swift currents of water in a river (23).

छायेव लक्ष्मीश्चपला प्रतीता तारुण्यमम्बूर्मिवदध्रुवं च।

स्वप्नोपमं स्त्रीसुखमायुरल्पं तथापि जन्तोरभिमान एषः॥ २४॥

संसृतिः स्वप्नसदृशी सदा रोगादिसङ्कुला। गन्धर्वनगरप्रख्या मूढस्तामनुवर्तते॥ २५॥

chāyeva lakṣmīścapalā pratitā tāruṇyamambūrmivadadhruvaṃ ca /
svapnopamaṃ strīsukhamāyuralpaṃ tathāpi jantorabhimāna eṣaḥ // 24
saṁsṛtiḥ svapnasadr̥śī sadā rogādīsaṅkulā /
gāndharavanagaraprakhyā mūḍhastāmanuvartate // 25

24-25. It is evident without any doubt that Laxmi (worldly wealth, money, prosperity) is as transient, temporary and illusive as a shadow, youth is as perishable and short-lived as a wave in water, comfort of woman is as false and nightmarish as a dream, and life is of a most minimal (short) duration—inspite of that, the creature has great pride in them (24).

This world is verily a collection of various diseases and torments (i.e. full of distress, grief, agonies, sorrows, troubles and tribulations), as well as is false and illusive

like a dream and a city of Gandharvas (celestial musicians)—only foolish and ignorant ones regard it as true, and indulgently follow it and remain indulged in it (25).

आयुष्यं क्षीयते यस्मादादित्यस्य गतागतैः। दृष्ट्वान्येषां जरामृत्यू कथञ्चिन्नैव बुध्यते॥ २६॥
स एव दिवसः सैव रात्रिरित्येव मूढधीः। भोगाननुपतत्येव कालवेगं न पश्यति॥२७॥

āyusyaṃ kṣīyate yasmādādityasya gatāgataiḥ /
dr̥ṣṭvānyeṣāṃ jarāmṛtyū kathañcinnaiḥ budhyate // 26
sa eva divasaḥ saiva rātrirityeva mūḍhadhīḥ /
bhogānanupatatyeva kālavegaṃ na paśyati // 27

26-27. The age (or life) is steadily decaying (i.e. wasting away, shortening, coming to an end) with the rise and setting of the daily sun. Old age and death of others is being observed by the creatures daily, but still the foolish ones do not wake up to the reality (26).

The day and night follow the same pattern, but an ignorant fool pursues the material comforts and pleasures of the sense objects without observing the passage of Kaal (time, death). That is, he does not wake up to the fact that death is fast approaching him (27).

प्रतिक्षणं क्षरत्येतदायुरामघटाम्बुवत्। सपत्ना इव रोगौघाः शरीरं प्रहरन्त्यहो॥ २८॥
जरा व्याघ्रीव पुरतस्तर्जयन्त्यवतिष्ठते। मृत्युः सहैव यात्येष समयं सम्प्रतीक्षते॥२९॥

pratikṣaṇaṃ kṣaratyetadāyurāmaghaṭāmbuvat /
sapatnā iva rogaughāḥ śarīraṃ praharantyaḥ // 28
jarā vyāghrīva puratastarjayantyaḥ avatiṣṭhate /
mr̥tyuḥ sahaiva yātyeṣa samayaṃ sampratīkṣate // 29

28-29. Age (life) is decaying and wasting away every moment like water filled in an unripe clay pot (for it gradually seeps out), while the hordes of various diseases are destroying the body gradually like so many besieging enemies fighting a war of attrition (28).

Old age is menacingly standing in the front like a frightening, ferocious, cruel and savage lioness, while death walks alongside it waiting for the opportune moment to strike (or pounce on the victim like a lioness does on its prey) (29).

देहेऽहंभावमापन्नो राजाहं लोकविश्रुतः। इत्यस्मिन्मनुते जन्तुः कृमिविड्भस्मसंज्ञिते॥ ३०॥
त्वगस्थिमांसविण्मूत्ररेतोरक्तादिसंयुतः। विकारी परिणामी च देह आत्मा कथं वद॥ ३१॥
यमास्थाय भवॉल्लोकं दग्धुमिच्छति लक्ष्मण। देहाभिमानिनः सर्वे दोषाः प्रादुर्भवन्ति हि॥ ३२॥

dehe'haṃbhāvamāpanno rājāhaṃ lokaviśrutaḥ /
ityasminmanute jantuḥ kṛmiviḍbhasmasañjñite // 30
tvagasthimāṃsaviṇmūtraretoraktādisaṃyutaḥ /

vikārī pariṇāmī ca deha ātmā katham vada // 31
yamāsthāya bhavāmllokaṃ dagdhumicchati lakṣmaṇa /
dehābhimāninaḥ sarve doṣāḥ prādurbhavanti hi // 32

30-32. Only those who have egoistic attachments with this abhorable body resembling such detestable things as germs or worms, excreta and ash, consider themselves as 'I am a world famous king' (30).

Oh Laxman! Think deeply and then say that the body relying upon the strength of (or using the medium of) which you wish to burn and scorch the world (see verse no. 16), and which is made up of skin, bones, flesh, excreta, urine, sperms/ova and blood etc.—how can that resultant evil, faulty and filthy body ever be the Atma (soul; or pure self)? Oh brother! All faults arise (i.e. make their appearance) in a person who is proud of his (gross) body (31-32).

देहोऽहमिति या बुद्धिरविद्या सा प्रकीर्तिता। नाहं देहश्चिदात्मेति बुद्धिर्विद्येति भण्यते॥ ३३॥
अविद्या संसृतेर्हेतुर्विद्या तस्या निवर्तिका। तस्माद्यत्नः सदाकार्यो विद्याभ्यासे मुमुक्षुभिः। कामक्रोधादयस्तत्र
शत्रवः शत्रुसूदन॥३४॥

deho'hamiti yo buddhiravidyā sā prakīrtitā /
nāhaṃ dehaścidātmēti buddhirvidyēti bhaṇyate // 33
avidyā saṃsṛterheturvidyā tasyā nivartikā /
tasmādyatnaḥ sadā kāryo vidyābhyāse mumukṣubhiḥ /
kāmakrodhādayastatra śatravaḥ śatrusūdana // 34

33-34. The fallacious thinking that 'I am the body' (i.e. I am recognised by my physical body or my true identity is the gross body) is called ignorance, while the belief or realisation that 'I am not the body, but the pure consciousness or soul' is self realisation, enlightenment, true knowledge and wisdom (33).

Ignorance and delusions are the cause of the world representing birth and death, while wisdom, truthful knowledge and enlightenment frees or delivers one from it. Hence, the seekers of emancipation and salvation should strive to gain true wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment. Oh the vanquisher of enemies! Lust, greed, yearnings, anger etc. are the enemies that create obstacles and hindrances in this path (34).

तत्रापि क्रोध एवालं मोक्षविघ्नाय सर्वदा। येनाविष्टः पुमान्हन्ति पितृभ्रातृसुहृत्सरवीन्॥ ३५॥
क्रोधमूलो मनस्तापः क्रोधः संसारबन्धनम्। धर्मक्षयकरः क्रोधस्तस्मात्क्रोधं परित्यज॥३६॥
क्रोध एष महान् शत्रुस्तृष्णा वैतरणी नदी। सन्तोषो नन्दनवनं शान्तिरेव हि कामधुक्॥३७॥

tatrāpi krodha evālaṃ mokṣavighnāya sarvadā /
yenāviṣṭaḥ pumānhanti pitṛbhrāṭṛsuhṛtsakhīn // 35
krodhamūlo manastāpaḥ krodhaḥ saṃsārabandhanam /
dharmakṣayakaraḥ krodhastasmātkrodhaṃ parityaja // 36
krodha eṣa mahān śatrustrṣṇā vaitaraṇī nadī /

santoṣo nandanavanaṃ śāntireva hi kāmādhuk // 37

35-37. Out of these, anger, wrath and maliciousness are sufficient to put an obstacle (i.e. a spanner in the wheel) in obtaining emancipation and salvation, because under its spell a person kills even his father, mother, dear ones, brothers and friends (35).

The root cause of mental agitations and anguish, perplexity and vengeance, is anger, vengeance and maliciousness. It is the evil anger that ties one in worldly shackles to this mundane world (because he thinks that he has to settle scores with someone, and strives for it, resulting in a chain of actions and reactions). This results in decay or destruction of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, noble thoughts and conduct). Therefore, you should forsake anger (36).

This anger, malice, wrath and vengeance are the great enemy; attachments, infatuations and yearnings are the legendary 'Vaitarni river' (the mythical river that the soul has to cross before it can enter heaven); contentedness, satisfaction and having no desires or yearnings whatsoever is the 'Nandan Van' (the forest in heaven marked by peace, tranquility, serenity, happiness and profusion); and peace, tranquility, serenity, bliss and calmness of mind and heart are the 'Kamdhenu cow' (the celestial cow of the Gods which is all wish fulfilling) (37).

तस्माच्छान्तिं भजस्वाद्य शत्रुत्वेवं भवेन्न ते। देहेन्द्रियमनः प्राणबुद्ध्यादिभ्यो विलक्षणः॥ ३८॥
आत्मा शुद्धः स्वयंज्योतिरविकारी निराकृतिः। यावद्देहेन्द्रियप्राणैर्भिन्नत्वं नात्मनो विदुः॥ ३९॥
तावत्संसारदुःखौघैः पीड्यन्ते मृत्युसंयुताः। तस्मात्त्वं सर्वदा भिन्नमात्मानं हृदि भावय॥ ४०॥
बुद्ध्यादिभ्यो बहिः सर्वमनुवर्तस्व मा खिदः। भुञ्जन्प्रारब्धमखिलं सुखं वा दुःखमेव वा॥ ४१॥

tasmācchāntiṃ bhajasvādya śatrurevaṃ bhavenna te /
dehendriyamaṇapṛāṇabuddhyādibhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ // 38
ātmā śuddhaḥ svayaṃjyotiravikārī nirākṛtiḥ /
yāvaddehendriyapṛāṇairbhinnatvaṃ nātmano viduḥ // 39
tāvatsaṃsāraduḥkhaughaiḥ pīḍyante mṛtyusaṃyutāḥ /
tasmāttvaṃ sarvadā bhinnamātmānaṃ hṛdi bhāvaya // 40
buddhyādibhyo bahiḥ sarvamanuvartasva mā khidaḥ /
bhuñjanpṛārabdhamakhilaṃ sukhaṃ vā duḥkhameva vā // 41

38-41. Hence, be at ease with yourself and calm down. By doing so, the enemy (in the form of anger) will not have any affect on you. The soul or Atma is different and separate from the body, the sense organs, the emotive mind and heart, the vital winds called Prans, and the intellect and discrimination faculty; it is pure, self illuminated, faultless, without any blemish or tarnish, and is an attributeless, formless entity. As long as a person does not realise or understand that the Atma (soul, pure consciousness, 'the real self') is different and distinct from the body, sense organs and vital winds etc., he remains tied (or entangled) to the snare of life and death (because the gross body and its constituents parts are perishable). Consequentially, he has to suffer from hordes of worldly agonies and sorrows, torments and tribulations. Therefore, you must treat your Atma, which is pure conscious self, as separate and distinct from your mind-intellect apparatus etc., follow

this external world of deeds and actions with a behaviour consonant with this moral and spiritual outlook, and bear (cope with) both the sorrows and joys—whatever you get as destined for you by your previous deeds—with equanimity and forbearance, without having any mental anguish, restlessness, contrition and regrets (i.e. any kind of mental tumult) whatsoever (38-41).

प्रवाहपतितं कार्यं कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यसे। बाह्ये सर्वत्र कर्तृत्वमावहन्नपि राघव॥ ४२॥
अन्तःशुद्धस्वभावस्त्वं लिप्यसे न च कर्मभिः। एतन्मयोदितं कृत्स्नं हृदि भावय सर्वदा॥ ४३॥

pravāhapatitaṃ kāryaṃ kurvannapi na lipyase /
bāhye sarvatra kartṛtvamāvahannapi rāghava // 42
antaḥśuddhasvabhāvastvaṃ lipyase na ca karmabhiḥ /
etanmayoditaṃ kṛtsnaṃ hr̥di bhāvaya sarvadā // 43

42-43. Oh Raghav (Laxman)! If you continue to do deeds using the external sense organs of the body, as and when those deeds present themselves before you, requiring your attention as per the destined course of action (destiny), you still would not be bound in the shackles created by those deeds (because your mind and heart would remain detached from the deeds and their results) (42).

Being internally and mentally free from the encumbrances attendant with having 'Rag and Dwesh' (having infatuations, attachments and the sense of belonging, and the opposite notion of having hatred, malice or ill-will towards anyone respectively), as well as by having a pure, uncorrupt and righteous way of thinking, you shall be deemed not to be indulgent, involved or attached with those actions or deeds that your body does. Ponder deeply in your heart on all that I have said, and always keep it in your mind (43).

संसारदुःखैरखिलैर्बाध्यसे न कदाचन। त्वमप्यम्ब मयाऽऽदिष्टं हृदि भावय नित्यदा॥ ४४॥
समागमं प्रतीक्षस्व न दुःखैः पीड्यसे चिरम्। न सदैकत्र संवासः कर्ममार्गानुवर्तिनाम्॥ ४५॥
यथा प्रवाहपतितप्लवानां सरितां तथा। चतुर्दशसमासङ्ख्या क्षणार्द्धमिव जायते॥ ४६॥
अनुमन्यस्व मामम्ब दुःखं सन्त्यज्य दूरतः। एवं चेत्सुखसंवासो भविष्यति वने मम॥ ४७॥

saṁsāraduḥkhairakhilairbādhyase na kadācana /
tvamapyamba mayā"diṣṭaṃ hr̥di bhāvaya nityadā // 44
samāgamaṃ pratīkṣasva na duḥkhaiḥ pīḍyase ciraṃ /
na sadaikatra saṁvāsaḥ karmamārgānuvartinām // 45
yathā pravāhapatitaplavānāṃ saritāṃ tathā /
caturdaśasamāsaṅkhyā kṣaṇārdhamiva jāyate // 46
anumanyasva māmamba duḥkhaṃ santyajya dūrataḥ /
evaṃ cetsukhasaṁvāso bhaviṣyati vane mama // 47

44-47. By following this (my advise), you shall never be hindered (i.e. bogged or cowed down) by the various sorrows, agonies, troubles and tribulations of this mundane world'. Then Sri Ram addressed his mother, 'Oh mother (Kaushalya)! You should also pay

attention to and deeply ponder over what I have said on a regular basis (i.e. persistently, constantly, daily) (44), and wait for the time when I shall meet you again (upon my coming back from the forest after fourteen years). You will not have sorrows and agonies for long. Creatures who are tied to the snare of their deeds and their incumbent results cannot always expect to have co-existence (45)—even as boats without sails, which are floating down the swift currents of a river, do not always remain together. Oh mother! This seemingly long fourteen year period will fly away as if it were only half of a moment. All of you remove your sorrows and lamentations, and give me permission to proceed to the forest. If you do so, I shall live happily (without any regrets and sense of guilt of being the cause of agonies and anguish to others) in the forest' (46-47)."

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Canto 2.2

Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 16-55. Here again, Lord Ram has taught Laxman.

एकदा लक्ष्मणो राममेकान्ते समुपस्थितम्। विनयावनतो भूत्वा पप्रच्छ परमेश्वरम्॥ १६॥
भगवन् श्रोतुमिच्छामि मोक्षस्यैकान्तिकीं गतिम्। त्वत्तः कमलपत्राक्ष संक्षेपाद्वक्तुमर्हसि॥ १७॥
ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं भक्तिवैराग्यबृंहितम्। आचक्ष्व मे रघुश्रेष्ठ वक्ता नान्योऽस्ति भूतले॥ १८॥

ekadā lakṣmaṇo rāmamekānte samupasthitam /
vinayāvanato bhūtvā papraccha parameśvaram // 16
bhagavan śrotumicchāmi mokṣasyaikāntikīm gatim /
tvattaḥ kamalapatrākṣa saṁkṣepādvaktumarhasi // 17
jñānaṁ vijñānasahitaṁ bhaktivairāgyabr̥hīhitam /
ācakṣva me raghuśreṣṭha vaktā nānyo'sti bhūtale // 18

16-18. One day, Laxman went to Sri Ram who was sitting alone, and asked him politely (16), 'Oh Bhagwan (Lord)! I wish to hear from your mouth the sure and uncorrupted (i.e. real, truthful, correct) way to attain emancipation and salvation. Hence, oh the lotus-eyed one, describe it to me in brief (17).

Oh the most exalted one in Raghu's clan (Sri Ram)! Tell me the truthful knowledge infused and suffused, laced and soaked, with devotion, renunciation and wisdom. In this world, there is no one else to articulately elucidate on this subject other than you' (18).

शृणु वक्ष्यामि ते वत्स गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं परम्। यद्विज्ञाय नरो जह्यात्सद्यो वैकल्पिकं भ्रमम्॥ १९॥
आदौ मायास्वरूपं ते वक्ष्यामि तदनन्तरम्। ज्ञानस्य साधनं पश्चाज्ज्ञानं विज्ञानसंयुतम्॥ २०॥

śrīrāma uvāca

śṛṇu vakṣyāmi vatsa guhyādgūhyataram param /
yadvijñāya naro jahyātsadyo vaikalpakam bhramam // 19

ādaṁ māyāsvarūpaṁ te vakṣyāmi tadanantaram /
jñānasya sādhanam paścājjñānam vijñānasamṛutam // 20

19-20. Sri Ram said, 'Oh son! Listen, I shall now tell you the most secret, untold, mysterious and esoteric knowledge that is very difficult to access and comprehend. But it is so potent and effective that it has the potential to make a man freed immediately (very soon) from the illusion (deception) created by the confusing, confounding and perplexing nature of this world (19).

First of all, I shall tell you the fundamental nature and form of 'Maya' (i.e. what Maya truly is?), then I shall tell you the way to achieve/attain 'Gyan' (true knowledge of the reality, erudition, expertise about the reality leading to enlightenment and wisdom), and thereafter I shall describe that Gyan which is based on sound logic, rational and reasoning, and is therefore known as 'Vigyan' (20).

ज्ञेयं च परमात्मानं यज्ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते भयात्। अनात्मनि शरीरादावात्मबुद्धिस्तु या भवेत्॥ २१॥
सैव माया तयैवासौ संसारः परिकल्प्यते। रूपे द्वे निश्चिते पूर्वं मायायाः कुलनन्दन॥ २२॥
विक्षेपावरणे तत्र प्रथमं कल्पयेज्जगत्। लिङ्गाद्यब्रह्मपर्यन्तं स्थूलसूक्ष्मविभेदतः॥ २३॥

jñeyam ca paramātmānam yajjñātvā mucyate bhayāt /
anātmāni śarīrādāvātmabuddhistu yā bhavet // 21
saiva māyā tayaivāsau saṁsāraḥ parikalpyate /
rūpe dve niścite pūrvam māyāyāḥ kulanandana // 22
vikṣepāvaraṇe tatra prathamam kalpayejjagat /
liṅgādyabrahmaparyantaṁ sthūlasūkṣmavibhedataḥ // 23

21-23. Besides these, I shall also tell you that aspect of the basic nature and form of the supreme Soul called 'Parmatma', who is the Lord of all that exists, which can be experienced and witnessed, which is accessible, knowable, discernible, realisable, conceivable and understandable. This eclectic knowledge entitles a person to become free from the fears of this deluding, illusionary, entrapping and mundane world.

[Describing Maya or delusions, ignorance etc., Sri Ram elucidates—] 'Maya' (roughly referring to delusions, ignorance, misconceptions, hallucinations, deceptions) is defined as the tendency to identify and correlate the Atma (which is the truthful, pure and conscious 'self', or the soul of the creature) with the body or to those things or substances which are not at all related to the Atma and are extraneous to it (because they are gross, non-eternal, perishable, false and illusionary in essence and by nature; because they lack any and all those virtues which are so characteristic of the entity known as the Atma). This world has been imagined (visualised) due to this Maya. Oh Kulnandan (the son of our clan, i.e. Laxman)! Maya has been conceptualized as having two primary forms (21-22)—one is 'Vikshep' (perplexity of mind, confusion, diversion or distractions from the chosen path, wavering, fickleness and their incumbent sorrows and agitations), and the other is 'Awaran' (covering, envelop, veil or a sheath of ignorance and misconception which covers or hides the truth). Out of these two, the first one, 'Vikshep' (i.e. the power to create delusions, to tendency to deflect from the truth, to weave illusions and create a

web of confusions that lead to perplexity), creates the imaginary world consisting of the entire gamut of subtle and gross qualities or elements that constitute this creation, extending from the microcosmic individual creature right up to the supreme Brahm, by the virtue of differentiating between them. That is, Maya creates a deception that Brahm and the rest of the subtle as well as the gross creation—both the animate as well as the inanimate, both at the microcosmic as well as the macrocosmic level, both at the plain of the individual creature as well as at the celestial plain of the vast cosmos---are two different and distinct entities, whereas the truth is quite the opposite. For, it is the same Brahm that has revealed in all these forms. In simple terms, in day to day language, it means ‘by differentiating between you and me, your and mine’ etc, which is the cause of all schisms and dichotomy in this world. This also creates the false sense of ‘duality’ where there is none. (23).

अपरं त्वखिलं ज्ञानरूपमावृत्य तिष्ठति। मायया कल्पितं विश्वं परमात्मनि केवले॥ २४॥
 रज्जौ भुजङ्गवद् भ्रान्त्या विचारे नास्ति किञ्चन। श्रूयते दृश्यते यद्यत्स्मर्यते वा नरैः सदा॥ २५॥
 असदेव हि तत्सर्वं यथा स्वप्नमनोरथौ। देह एव हि संसारवृक्षमूलं दृढं स्मृतम्॥ २६॥

aparaṃ tvakhilaṃ jñānarūpamāvṛtya tiṣṭhati /
 māyayā kalpitaṃ viśvaṃ paramātmāni kevale // 24
 rajjau bhujaṅgavad bhrāntyā vicāre nāsti kiñcana /
 śrūyate drśyate yadyatsmaryate vā naraiḥ sadā // 25
 asadeva hi tatsarvaṃ yathā svapnāmanorathau /
 deha eva hi saṃsāravṛkṣamūlaṃ dṛḍhaṃ smṛtaṃ // 26

24-26. The second power of Maya is called ‘Awaran’ (cover). It completely surrounds and perpetually covers ‘Gyan’ (truthful knowledge, erudition, wisdom, enlightenment, self-realisation) in a sheath or veil which either hides or at least taints the truth (about the essential, rightful knowledge of the true nature of the soul or the pure conscious ‘self’) in a sustained manner. The consequence is that this whole world is an imaginary conception having its origin in the deceptions created by this Maya, while the only thing that is true and real is the supreme and transcendental entity called the Parmatma (supreme Soul) (24).

Like the false fear created by the ignorance of the reality that makes one erroneously believe that there is a snake when one sees a length of lifeless rope, on deep thought and contemplation we get the insight that everything is false and imaginary, with no essence and pith in it. Whatever people always hear, see and remember (25) are all false like a dream, and is only the result of their fertile imagination. The body is like the strong root of this deluding world-like tree (because it is due to the body that one perceives this world, sees it, hears it, feels it, smells it and gets involved with it; it is the body by which one enjoys it, develops various relationships in it, creates attachments or hatreds with it or renounces it, does good or bad deeds in it, and generally gets tangled in it.) (26).

तन्मूलः पुत्रदारादिबन्धः किं तेऽन्यथात्मनः॥२७॥

देहस्तु स्थूलभूतानां पञ्च तन्मात्रपञ्चकम्। अहंकारश्च बुद्धिश्च इन्द्रियाणि तथा दश॥ २८॥
 चिदाभासो मनश्चैव मूलप्रकृतिरेव च। एतत्क्षेत्रमिति ज्ञेयं देह इत्यभिधीयते॥ २९॥
 एतैर्विलक्षणो जीवः परमात्मा निरामयः। तस्य जीवस्य विज्ञाने साधनान्यपि मे शृणु॥ ३०॥

tanmūlaḥ putradārādibandhaḥ kiṃ te'nyathātmanah // 27
 dehasu sthūlabhūtānāṃ pañca tanmātrapañcakam /
 ahaṁkāraśca buddhiśca indriyāṇi tathā daśa // 28
 cidābhāso manaścaiva mūlaprakṛtīreva ca /
 etatkṣetramiti jñeyaṃ deha ityabhidhīyate // 29
 etairvilakṣaṇo jīvaḥ paramātmā nirāmayah /
 tasya jīvasya vijñāne sādhanānyapi me śṛṇu // 30

27-30. It is this body that is the root cause of one having different worldly ties such as those pertaining to his sons, his wife and his other kith and kin (which lead to the fetters of attachments and worries about them). Otherwise, say, what has the Atma got to do with it? (27).

The Atma resides in a realm called the 'body'. This body consists of the certain subtle components—viz. (a) five gross elements, (b) the five subtle sense perceptions, certain inherent qualities and characteristic traits that form and decide the basic nature and temperament of a creature---(c) such as the quality of 'Ahankar', and (d) the virtue of having 'Buddhi'.

Besides these, there are other components, such as (e) the ten sense organs (five organs of perception and five organs of action) (28), (f) the reflection of the supreme consciousness in the soul or Atma present inside the bosom of the body that lends consciousness to the latter, (g) the 'Mana' consisting of the mind and the heart (or the various thoughts and emotions experienced by the body), and (h) 'Prakriti' which refers to the basic nature, temperament and inclinations that are inherent and an integral part of the creature's thought processes and his personality.

A combination of all these (from 'a' to 'h' above) should be regarded as the 'area' or 'domain' of the Atma. It is also known as the 'body' in which the Atma resides (29).

The Jiva (the living being) is faultless and pure, it is innocent and beyond reproach, because it is an embodiment, a personification, a reflection or an image of the Parmatma who is the supreme Soul of the creation, and who is immaculate, uncorrupt, pristine pure, beyond reproach and reproof, and is pure consciousness and truthful.

Now I shall tell you some methods and means to recognise and understand what that 'Jiva' actually is. Listen carefully (30)—

[Note---(1) The five gross elements in creation mentioned in (a) above are—earth, water, fire, air, sky.

(2) The five subtle sense perceptions mentioned in (b) above are--- smell, touch, taste, sight, hearing.

(3) The quality called Ahankar mentioned in (c) above briefly means the notion of having pride, ego, haughtiness and hypocrisy.

(4) The virtue of Buddhi as mentioned in (d) above can be briefly described as the power to think rationally and intelligently; the virtues of wisdom and intelligent thought processes which are the functions of the mind-intellect complex and discrimination faculty of the creature.

(5) The ten sense organs mentioned in (e) above are the following:-- five organs of perceptions which are eyes (for sight), ears (for hearing), nose (for smelling), tongue (for tasting) and skin (for touching and feeling); and five organs of actions which are hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory.]

जीवश्च परमात्मा च पर्यायो नात्र भेदधीः। मानाभावस्तथा दम्भहिंसादिपरिवर्जनम् ॥ ३१ ॥

पराक्षेपादिसहनं सर्वत्रावक्रता तथा। मनोवाक्कायसद्भक्त्या सद्गुरोः परिसेवनम् ॥ ३२ ॥

jīvaśca paramātmā ca paryāyo nātra bhedadhīḥ /
mānābhāvastathā dambhahiṁsādiparivarjanam // 31
parākṣepādisahanam sarvatrāvakratā tathā /
manovākkāyasadbhaktiā sadguroḥ parisevanam // 32

31-32. The Jiva (the individual living being represented by the microcosmic soul) and Parmatma (the Supreme Being who is the Lord of creation and represents the macrocosmic Soul of creation and the primary entity from which the rest of the creation evolved) are synonymous with each other—both mean and indicate the same entity. Hence, one should not distinguish between the two of them; one should not have a notion of duality.

[Now the sage enumerates the virtues that help in attaining enlightenment and acquiring wisdom about the ultimate truth and reality.] One should be far from having arrogance, ego, pride, haughtiness, vanity and hypocrisy; one should forsake boast, deceit, imposterism and wickedness as well as all forms of violence and causing harm to others in any form (31); one should tolerate with equanimity, fortitude and forbearance false accusations, insinuations, aspersions and rebukes made by others; one should be of a universally simple and humble temperament and outlook; one should devotedly, sincerely and diligently serve a true Guru (a selfless and wise teacher, guide and moral preceptor) by one's mind and heart, by speech and words, and by the body (32).

बाह्याभ्यन्तरसंशुद्धिः स्थिरता सत्क्रियादिषु। मनोवाक्कायदण्डश्च विषयेषु निरीहता ॥ ३३ ॥

निरहङ्कारता जन्मजराद्यालोचनं तथा। असक्तिः स्नेहशून्यत्वं पुत्रदारधनादिषु ॥ ३४ ॥

इष्टानिष्टागमे नित्यं चित्तस्य समता तथा। मयि सर्वात्मके रामे ह्यनन्यविषया मतिः ॥ ३५ ॥

bāhyābhyantarasaṁśuddhiḥ sthīratā satkriyādiṣu /
manovākkāyadaṇḍaśca viṣayeṣu nirīhatā // 33
nirahaṅkāratā janmajarādyālocanam tathā /
asktiḥ snehaśūnyatvam putradāradhanādiṣu // 34
iṣṭāniṣṭāgame nityam cittasya samatā tathā /
mayi sarvātmake rāme hyananyaviṣayā matiḥ // 35

33-35. One should be pure both outwardly as well as inwardly; one should be eager and diligent in doing righteous, noble, auspicious, virtues and good deeds; one should have self restraint and exercise discipline over the mind and intellect, over the speech and words spoken, and over the body and its actions and deeds; one should not be indulgent in sensual pleasures of this material world (33); one should be totally free from having the negative traits such as pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance (Ahankar); one should think and contemplate over the miseries, agonies and tribulations caused by and associated with birth, death, disease and old age (for this would inculcate detachment and renunciation in him and prevent him from indulgence in the gross body, attempts at its gratification, and remaining too much enamoured with it and the external world); one should not be too overly infatuated, involved, fascinated, fond, engrossed or attached with women, sons and wealth (literally, the entire worldly property and family, because they are the concern of the body and not the Atma which has got nothing to do with either the world or the body which interacts with it) (34); one should be even minded, remain unruffled, unmoved and steady, have forbearance, fortitude and equanimity during both favourable and/or unfavourable circumstances as well as during honour or rebuke; one should unwaveringly focus and devotedly concentrate his mind and intellect upon me, Ram, who is the ‘soul or Atma’ of all the creatures (35).

जनसम्बाधरहितशुद्धदेशनिषेवणम् । प्राकृतैर्जनसङ्घैश्च ह्यरतिः सर्वदा भवेत् ॥ ३६ ॥
आत्मज्ञाने सदोद्योगो वेदान्तार्थवलोकनम् । उक्तैरैतैर्भवेज्ज्ञानं विपरीतैर्विपर्ययः ॥ ३७ ॥

janasambādharahitaśuddhadeśaniṣevaṇam /
prākṛtairjanasaṅghaiśca hyaratiḥ sarvadā bhavet // 36
ātmajñāne sadodyogo vedāntārthāvalokanam /
uktairairbhavejjñānaṃ viparītairviparyayaḥ // 37

36-37. One should reside (for the purpose of meditation, concentration, peace, serenity and tranquility of mind) at a secluded/lonely place which is sanctified and compatible (i.e. the general ambience or atmosphere of the place is conducive to spiritual pursuits); one should be always indifferent to, unaffected by, untangled from, uninvolved with and not bothering about people who can be classified as being ‘worldly’ (i.e. those whose main aim is the pursuit of the world and gratification of their sense organs; they live and die for it rather than for spiritual pursuits) (36); one should always endeavour to make diligent and sincere efforts to try to understand the nature of the pure or true self, and should contemplate/ponder/reflect upon the meaning and teachings of Vedanta.

By following these sacred paths (i.e. observing these rules and tenets, and by inculcating them in their daily lives) a seeker finds ‘Gyan’ (true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment), while adopting the opposite behaviour results in an opposite effect (i.e. one gets ‘Agyan’—ignorance, delusions, entrapments, disenchantments, disillusionments, frustrations etc.) (37).

[Note :- Verse nos. 31-37 tell us the noble way by which we can not only obtain enlightenment but also tranquility of mind even while living in this world. Especially, verse no. 36 should not be misconstrued as advising running away from the world to a forest—but it implies that one's own bedroom, house and by extension even the larger work place or the immediate surroundings can

effect us only when we think that they exist at all and we are in some way related to it and effected by it. The subtle meaning is to ‘turn inwards’ amidst the cacophony and clamour that is present in the external noisy world outside, for real and truthful peace comes from inside and it is futile to seek it outside. The verse also means that one should avoid pervert and selfish world which are hindrance in one’s final liberation and deliverance from the shackles of the body and the seemingly interminable cycle of birth and death.]

बुद्धिप्राणमनोदेहाहंकृतिभ्यो विलक्षणः। चिदात्माहं नित्यशुद्धो बुद्ध एवेति निश्चयम्॥ ३८॥
येन ज्ञानेन संवित्ते तज्ज्ञानं निश्चितं च मे। विज्ञानं च तदैवैतत्साक्षदनुभवेद्यदा॥ ३९॥

buddhiprāṇamanodehāhankṛtibhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ /
cidātmāhaṁ nityaśuddho buddha eveti niścayaṁ // 38
yena jñānena samvitte tajjñānaṁ niścitaṁ ca me /
vijjñānaṁ ca tadaivaitatsākṣādanubhavedyadā // 39

38-39. [Describing what is the meaning of ‘Gyan and Vigyan’, Sri Ram elucidates—] That which kindles enlightenment and awakens the realisation that the entity known as ‘I’ is a stranger to, is separate and distinct from, and is independent of other entities known as (1) Buddhi (intelligence and the faculty of discrimination, rational thoughts, wit, comprehension, sagacity), (2) Pran (vital wind forces of life, the breath that injects life and senses in the body, the vitality and senses present in a creature that helps to distinguish between animate and inanimate ones), (3) Mana (the heart and mind, the emotions and thoughts, dispositions and inclinations, intentions and desires, attention and purpose), (4) Deha (the ‘body’ consisting of the ten external gross sense organs of perceptions and actions, the subtle mind-intellect complex, and the causal body which harbours the Atma as the pure consciousness of the creature), and (5) Ahankar (the notion of ego, false self assertion, vanity, arrogance, haughtiness and pride etc.), but is the ‘Atma’ (the microcosmic soul which is an image of the macrocosmic supreme Soul; the pure self; the true identity of the creature) which is eternal and infinite, is pristine pure, is a fount of wisdom and enlightenment, and is pure consciousness—this realisation or awareness is called ‘Gyan’; this is my conclusion and affirmation, this is what I have deduced and proclaim.

When this is witnessed or experienced in practical terms, it is known as ‘Vigyan’ (or logical derivation, confirmation and affirmation of certain things known in theory and now ratified as the unequivocal truth and the irrefutable fact, reasoned acknowledgement, or actual witness of facts so that there is no doubt or confusion as to their authenticity, veracity and truth. In other words, Vigyan is experimental Gyan, or Gyan put to practice by following the guidelines of Vedant) (38-39).

आत्मासर्वत्र पूर्णः स्याच्चिदानन्दात्मकोऽव्ययः। बुद्ध्याद्युपाधिरहितः परिणामादिवर्जितः॥ ४०॥
स्वप्रकाशेन देहादीन् भासयन्ननपावृतः। एक एवाद्वितीयश्च सत्यज्ञानादिलक्षणः॥ ४१॥
असङ्गः स्वप्रभो द्रष्टा विज्ञानेनावगम्यते। आचार्यशास्त्रोपदेशादैक्याज्ञानं यदा भवेत्॥ ४२॥
आत्मनोर्जीवपरयोर्मूलविद्या तदैव हि। लीयते कार्यकरणैः सहैव परमात्मनि॥ ४३॥

ātmā sarvatra pūrṇaḥ syāccidānandātmako'vyayaḥ /
 buddhyādyupādhirahitaḥ pariṇāmādivarjitaḥ // 40
 svaprakāśena dehādīn bhāsayannanapāvṛtaḥ /
 eka evādvitīyaśca satyajñānādilakṣaṇaḥ // 41
 asaṅgaḥ svaprabho draṣṭā vijñānenāvagamyate /
 ācāryaśāstropadeśādaikyajñānaṃ yadā bhavet // 42
 ātmanorjīvaparayormūlāvidyā tadaiva hi /
 līyate kāryakaraṇaiḥ sahaiva paramātmāni // 43

40-43. [Now the Lord describes the salient features of the Atma.] The grand and majestic, magnificent and mysterious entity known as the 'Atma' is all-complete, self sufficient and wholesome in all respects; it is an image, an embodiment and a fount of eternal bliss, happiness, peace and tranquility; it is characterized by the unique quality that it does not decay and is beyond destruction (i.e. it is imperishable); it is beyond the purview and comprehension of the mind-intellect complex as well as in no need of any honours and titles and epithets to establish and recognise its glories and majesties; and is also not subjected to the results and effects, to any reward or punishment for any deeds done and actions taken by the body of the creature (simply because the Atma is an independent entity as described in verse nos. 39-39 above) (40).

Though it lends a sublime glow or divine halo to the body, called the aura, by its own powers of illumination (or its divine effulgence effusing and radiating from it), it remains without any such halo or glow around itself¹. It is peerless and matchless, it is unique and unparallel. It has the form of truthful wisdom, sagacity, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment (41).

It is without any company, is independent and free from all encumbrances; it is self-illuminated, self-glorious, self-effulgent and self-enlightened; and it is a witness to all as well as a witness for all.

These facts are established by the virtue of Vigyan (practical application of theoretical knowledge as expounded by the Vedas and the Upanishads, and taught by the wise teacher, and witnessed by one by contemplation and deep ponderings and insight). When one becomes aware of the basic and fundamental fact about the oneness of the Atma with the Parmatma as a result of teaching of a wise moral preceptor (a Guru) or self study of scriptures, it is then that Avidya (ignorance and delusions), along with the instruments that it employs, such as the various deeds and their causes (both of which are imaginary and misconceived in the first place, and which are the reasons that trap the creature in the vicious cycle of actions and reactions, rewards and punishments, hopes and aspirations, one deed leading to another), collapses, dissolves and vanishes in the vast ocean represented by the Parmatma, which is the supreme Truth and Reality. This obliterates this Avidya for good (42-43).

सावस्था मुक्तिरित्युक्ता ह्युपचारोऽयमात्मनि । इदं मोक्षस्वरूपं ते कथितं रघुनन्दन ॥ ४४ ॥
 ज्ञानविज्ञानवैराग्यसहितं मे परात्मनः । किन्त्वेतर्दुर्लभं मन्ये मद्भक्तिविमुखात्मनाम् ॥ ४५ ॥

sāvasthā muktirityuktā hyupacāro'yamātmāni /
 idaṃ mokṣasvarūpaṃ te kathitaṃ raghunandana // 44

jñānavijñānavairāgyasahitaṃ me parātmanah /
kintvetaddurlabhaṃ manye madbhaktivimukhātmanām // 45

44-45. This stage when Avidya (ignorance, delusions, lack of true knowledge) vanishes and frees the creature from its clutches is called 'Moksha', which is liberation and deliverance from the shackles of ignorance and delusions leading to emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature. As for the soul (Atma), this is just like a remedy to cure it (or wash it) of all the dirt that has got stuck to it in the course of its long journey through various lives (because in actual fact, the state of emancipation and salvation is not strange or unknown to the soul—it is its intrinsic natural state of being, even as a body has a natural tendency to stay healthy and fight off infections and diseases on its own accord. But some times, antibiotic medicines and other such remedies are needed to help it to fight its own battle against diseases). Oh Raghunandan (Laxman)! (44).

I have told you the essence of what is the meaning of obtaining Moksha, along with what is Gyan, Vigyan, Vairagya (renunciation, non-attachment) and Parmatma. (So far so good, but—) For those who are devoid of my Bhakti (defined below in verse no. 47-51), I regard this attainment (of salvation) as very difficult and rare to access (45).

चक्षुष्मतामपि तथा रात्रौ सम्यङ् न दृश्यते। पदं दीपसमेतानां दृश्यते सम्यगेव हि॥ ४६॥
एवं मद्भक्तियुक्तानामात्मा सम्यक् प्रकाशते। मद्भक्तेः कारणं किञ्चिद्वक्ष्यामि शृणु तत्त्वतः॥ ४७॥

cakṣuṣmatāmapi tathā rātrau samyañ na dṛśyate /
padaṃ dīpasametānāṃ dṛśyate samyageva hi // 46
evaṃ madbhaktiyuktānāmātmā samyak prakāśate /
madbhakteḥ kāraṇaṃ kiñcidvakṣyāmi śṛṇu tattvataḥ // 47

46-47. Just like a person cannot see any sign or mark with his eyes in the darkness of night and can only see it in the light of the lamp, similarly only a person who has Bhakti in me (i.e. has sincere devotion and dedication in me, has firm conviction and faith in me, has surrendered his ego and pride and believes and implements what I say for his own welfare) can experience or witness the Atma.

Now I shall tell you some practical methods for my Bhakti which would inculcate the various benefits accruing with having sincere devotion and dedication for me, by surrendering one's false ego and pride, and instead developing such virtues as humility, submission, faith, belief, worship of the Lord, following the path shown by him etc. Listen carefully (46-47)—

मद्भक्तसङ्गो मत्सेवा मद्भक्तानां निरन्तरम्। एकादशपुवासादि मम पर्वानुमोदनम्॥ ४८॥
मत्कथाश्रवणे पाठे व्याख्याने सर्वदा रतिः। मत्पूजापरिनिष्ठा च मम नामानुकीर्तनम्॥ ४९॥

madbhaktasaṅgo matsevā madbhaktānāṃ nirantaraṃ /
ekādaśyupavāsādi mama parvānumodanam // 48
matkathāśravaṇe pāṭhe vyākhyāne sarvadā ratiḥ /
matpūjāpariniṣṭhā ca mama nāmānukīrtanam // 49

48-49. [These paths of Bhakti that can provide emancipation and salvation to the creature are the following—]

(1) To have constant contact, communion and interaction with my other devotees; (2) to do constant service to me and my devotees; (3) to keep fasting on Ikadashi day (the eleventh day of both the waxing and waning phases of the moon) and other designated auspicious occasions; (4) to celebrate my various festivals (i.e. commemorating various holy occasions); (5) to have enduring interest and love for hearing, reading, reciting and explaining the various divine stories associated with me; (6) to be ever eager and diligent towards my worship, honour and adoration; (7) and to chant, recite and repeat my holy name in a group in chorus (i.e. to do ‘Kirtan’) (48-49).

[Note :- The ‘constant serving of the Lord’ implies constant following of the path shown by the Lord himself—which is righteousness, noble thought and ethical conduct, virtuousness and pursuance of the path prescribed by the scriptures. By ‘constant service of my devotees’ it is meant to follow the example of those who are themselves truthful, righteous, pious, virtuous and noble. By saying ‘be vigilant or eager to worship me’ also means to diligently follow my advice and endeavour for spiritual enlightenment and liberation, and it implies implementing both the above two ways simultaneously. Worship does not mean merely performing meaningless rituals before any image in a mechanical way without understanding what principles Ram stood for.]

एवं सततयुक्तानां भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी। मयि सञ्जायते नित्यं ततः किमवशिष्यते॥ ५०॥
अतो मद्भक्तियुक्तस्य ज्ञानं विज्ञानमेव च। वैराग्यं च भवेच्छीघ्रं ततो मुक्तिमवाप्नुयात्॥ ५१॥

evaṃ satatayuktānāṃ bhaktiravyabhicārīṇī /
mayi sañjāyate nityaṃ tataḥ kimavaśiṣyate // 50
ato madbhaktiyuktasya jñānaṃ vijñānameva ca /
vairāgyaṃ ca bhavecchīghraṃ tato muktimavāpnuyāt // 51

50-51. In this way, those who always follow me and heed my advice, are consistent and steady in the path shown and endorsed by me, they surely develop unwavering and steady devotion in me. What else is left to be done (to attain emancipation and salvation)? (50).

Hence, it is certain that those persons who have (i.e. are endowed with) my truthful devotion (Bhakti) can soon get Gyan, Vigyan and Vairagya (and as a consequence of it, they soon achieve emancipation and salvation, which is the ultimate goal of the soul) (51).

[Note—Gyan and Agyan have been defined in verse no. 38-39 above, while Vairagya refers to the renunciation of the illusionary world and detachment from falsehood that is automatically created once Gyan, accompanied with Vigyan, takes firm root in the heart and mind of a creature. This helps the creature to break free from the fetters that shackle it to this deluding world of endless troubles and miseries originating from ignorance of the truth. This ultimate realisation is tantamount to Mukti, which literally means freedom.]

कथितं सर्वमेतत्ते तव प्रश्नानुसारतः। अस्मिन्मनः समाधाय यस्तिष्ठेत्स तु मुक्तिभाक्॥ ५२॥
न वक्तव्यमिदं यन्नामद्भक्तिविमुखाय हि। मद्भक्ताय प्रदातव्यमाहूयापि प्रयत्नतः॥ ५३॥

य इदं तु पठेन्नित्यं श्रद्धाभक्तिसमन्वितः। अज्ञानपटलध्वान्तं विधूय परिमुच्यते॥ ५४॥

kathitaṃ sarvametatte tava praśnānusārataḥ /
asminmanaḥ samādhāya yastiṣṭheta tu muktibhāḥ // 52
na vaktavyamidaṃ yatnānmadbhaktivimukhāya hi /
madbhaktāya pradātavyamāhūyāpi prayatnataḥ // 53
ya idaṃ tu paṭhennityaṃ śraddhābhaktisamanvitaḥ /
ajñānapaṭaladhvāntaṃ vidhūya parimucyate // 54

52-54. In this manner, according to your query, I have told you everything about this secret path. That person, who concentrates his mind and focuses his intellect on these magnificent tenets of great import, becomes entitled and eligible to attain emancipation and salvation (52).

Those who have no faith in me should not be explained anything that I have said (because they will deride it, cast doubts, make profane remarks and absurd comments, will mock, ridicule and demean it in their ignorance and delusions), while those who are my sincere devotees should purposefully and deliberately be explained and made to understand it (because it will benefit them and lead to their emancipation and salvation) (53).

That person who will always read it with faith, conviction, belief and devotion, shall remove the shadow or veil of darkness cast by the cluster/hordes of all delusions and ignorance surrounding him, and he shall be freed or delivered from the shackles of this mundane, entrapping, deluding existence (54).

भक्तानां मम योगिनां सुविमलस्वान्तातिशान्तात्मनां मत्सेवाभिरतात्मनां च विमलज्ञानात्मनां सर्वदा।
सङ्गं यः कुरुते सदोद्यतमतिस्तत्सेवनान्यधी—मोक्षस्तस्य करे स्थितोऽहमनिशं दृश्यो भवे नान्यथा॥ ५५॥

bhaktānāṃ mama yogināṃ suvimalasvāntātīśāntātmanāṃ
matsevābhiratātmanāṃ ca vimalajñānātmanāṃ sarvadā /
saṅgaṃ yaḥ kurute sadodyatamatistatsevanānanyadhi-
rmokṣastasya kare sthito'hamaniśaṃ dr̥śyo bhave nānyathā // 55

55. That person who serves me with a focused mind, a pure heart, serenity and tranquility of soul, with a pure, uncorrupted wisdom and intellect, and at the same time have constant communion and interaction with Yogis (ascetics) who are my supreme and ardent devotees, is always eager to serve them with diligence, sincerity and faith—emancipation and salvation are under their hands (i.e. within their reach, easily available to them). I always keep myself subtly present in front of the vision of such a person. Except this, there is no other way to have my Darshan (divine viewing and communion) (55).

[Note :- Here again, as in verse nos. 48-49, the first sentence of verse no. 55 implies servicing the noble path of righteousness, equality, tolerance etc. as described in verse nos. 31-37. Bhakti and Moksha are also described by Sri Ram in Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 20-44 which must be read in conjunction with this Canto 4, verse nos. 46-55.]

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Canto 2.3

Aranya Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 20-32. Here, Lord Ram has taught Sabari, the low-caste woman whom the Lord met in the dense forest.

श्रीराम उवाच

पुंस्त्वे स्त्रीत्वे विशेषो वा जातिनामाश्रमादयः। न कारणं मद्भजने भक्तिरेव हि कारणम्॥ २०॥
यज्ञदानतपोभिर्वा वेदाध्ययनकर्मभिः। नैव द्रष्टुमहं शक्यो मद्भक्तिविमुखैः सदा॥ २१॥
तस्माद्भामिनि संक्षेपाद्वक्ष्येऽहं भक्तिसाधनम्। सतां सङ्गतिरेवात्र साधनं प्रथमं स्मृतम्॥ २२॥

śrīrāma uvāca

puṁstve strītve viśeṣo vā jātināmāśramādayaḥ /
na kāraṇaṁ madbhajane bhaktireva hi kāraṇaṁ // 20
yajñādānatapobhirvā vedādhyayanakarmabhiḥ /
naiva draṣṭumaham śakyo madbhaktivimukhaiḥ sadā // 21
tasmādbhāmini saṅkṣepādvakṣye'ham bhaktisādhanaṁ /
satāṁ saṅgatirevātra sādhanam prathamam smṛtam // 22

20-22. (Sri Ram replied—) 'Distinction made on the basis of a male and female body, or distinction made on the basis of a person's caste, creed, clan, name and section of society, are not the criterion conducive for my 'Bhajan' (i.e. they are not the essential factors or a necessary requirements or the determining elements to make one eligible for my worship, prayer, adoration or devotion). The only factor is my sincere and dedicated 'Bhakti' (devotion and dedication for me, veneration and reverence for me, submission and surrender to me) (20).

Those who are devoid of dedicated and sincere Bhakti in me can never see me (have my auspicious communion and sight) by employing any other means such as doing various Yagyas (religious sacrifices), giving of Daan (charity, alms, donations), doing Tapa (austerities and penances, sufferance of hardships for spiritual pursuits), studying of the Vedas, or by any other method or deed (21).

Hence, oh gentle lady, I shall now describe to you in brief the methods, means or paths for my Bhakti. The first among them is communion with saints (where divine and spiritual talks are held) (22).

द्वितीयं मत्कथालापस्तृतीयं मद्गुणेरणम्। व्याख्यातृत्वं मद्भजसां चतुर्थं साधनं भवेत्॥ २३॥
आचार्योपासनं भद्रे मद्बुद्ध्यामायया सदा। पञ्चमं पुण्यशीलत्वं यमादि नियमादि च॥ २४॥
निष्ठा मत्पूजने नित्यं षष्ठं साधनमीरितम्। मम मन्त्रोपासकत्वं साङ्गं सप्तममुच्यते॥ २५॥

dvitīyaṁ matkathālāpastṛtīyaṁ madguṇeraṇam /

vyākhyāṭṛtvam madvacasām caturtham sādhanam bhavet // 23
 ācāryopāsanam bhadre madbuddhyāmāyayā sadā /
 pañcamam puṇyaśīlatvam yamādi niyamādi ca // 24
 niṣṭhā matpūjane nityam ṣaṣṭham sādhanamīritam /
 mama mantropāsakatvam sāṅgam saptamamucyate // 25

23-25. The second method is singing (i.e. listening, reading, studying, reciting, praising) the stories of my divine birth and deeds that I've done in this world.

The third method is to discuss and talk about my auspicious virtues and qualities, the stellar values and principles for which I stand, along with my noble characters.

The fourth method is to explain to others, to elucidate upon, to expound and narrate to them, to preach them and advice, and to remove their doubts about my 'divine words' (such as the great sayings, the profound spiritual philosophy, the doctrines, the tenets, the maxims and axioms of the Vedas, the Upanishads and other scriptures) (23).

Oh gentle one! The fifth path is to serve one's Guru (a learned and wise moral preceptor, a teacher, a guide) with full devotion, dedication and sincerity, thinking him to be next only to God and worthy of equal reverence and honour, without having any pretensions, conceit, wickedness and falsehood in such service.

The sixth path is to observe purity of thought, behaviour, conduct, inclination and temperament, to observe the tenets and fundamental principles concerning 'Yam and Niyam' (self control and restraint over the sense organs of the body, as well as to follow other relevant rules and regulations conducive to spiritual enhancement and general welfare of the creature), and to have inherent veneration, honour, affection and dedication towards me, while at the same time offering sincere worship, prayer, oblations, honour and service to me.

The seventh path is concentrating, meditating, contemplating, reflecting upon and worshipping my holy Mantra with all dedication and sincerity, completely involving all the senses, both the external ones as well as the internal ones, in doing so (24-25).

मद्भक्तेष्वधिका पूजा सर्वभूतेषु मन्मतिः। बाह्यार्थेषु विरागित्वं शमादिसहितं तथा॥ २६॥
 अष्टमं नवमं तत्त्वविचारो मम भामिनी। एवं नवविधा भक्तिः साधनं यस्य कस्य वा॥ २७॥
 स्त्रियो वा पुरुषस्यापि तिर्यग्योनिगतस्य वा। भक्तिः सञ्जायते प्रेमलक्षणा शुभलक्षणे॥ २८॥

madbhakteṣvadhikā pūjā sarvabhūteṣu manmatih /
 bāhyārtheṣu virāgitvam śamādisahitam tathā // 26
 aṣṭamam navamam tattvavicāro mama bhāmini /
 evam navavidhā bhaktih sādhanam yasya kasya vā // 27
 striyo vā puruṣasyāpi tiryagyonigatasya vā /
 bhaktih sañjāyate premalakṣaṇā śubhalakṣaṇe // 28

26-28. The eighth path is to worship, respect, revere, honour and adore my devotees more than me, to regard all the creatures as being my image (or my semblance; to regard me as being inherently present in all the creatures as their Atma and removing any vestiges of duality; to show respect them all as one would respect me), to have total

detachment, renunciation, indifference and dispassion towards all the external objects of this mundane, deluding and materialistic world while observing the principles and virtues of 'Sham' (peace, tranquility, calmness, restraint of sense organs and mind) and 'Dam' (tolerance, forbearance, endurance, fortitude etc.) (26).

The ninth path is to seriously discuss, contemplate upon, deeply ponder and endeavour to acquire deep insight, to learn and imbibe the fundamental truths and essential principles as expounded and enunciated by the scriptures (about me and this creation).

Oh gentle lady! These are the nine-fold paths of Bhakti (worship and devotion as defined above) (27). Oh the auspicious lady with good and virtuous characters! Anyone who has (i.e. possesses, inculcates or follows) any of these methods or paths, whether a woman, a man, a bird or an animal or any other form of creature, will indeed witness the emergence (sprouting) of the glorious virtue of devotion and worship, marked (characterised) by sincere and undiluted affection and love for me, the supreme Lord, in his heart. (28).

भक्तौ सञ्जातमात्रायं मत्तत्त्वानुभवस्तदा। ममानुभवसिद्धस्य मुक्तिस्तत्रैव जन्मनि॥ २९॥
स्यात्तस्मात्कारणं भक्तिर्मोक्षस्येति सुनिश्चितम्। प्रथमं साधनं यस्य भवेत्तस्य क्रमेण तु॥ ३०॥
भवेत्सर्वं ततो भक्तिर्मुक्तिरेव सुनिश्चितम्। यस्मान्मद्भक्तियुक्ता त्वं ततोऽहं त्वामुपस्थितः॥ ३१॥

bhaktau sañjātamātrāyāṃ mattattvānubhavastadā /
mamānubhavasiddhasya muktistatraiva janmani // 29
syāttasmātkāraṇaṃ bhaktirmokṣasyeti suniścitam /
prathamam sādhanam yasya bhavettasya krameṇa tu // 30
bhavetsarvaṃ tato bhaktirmuktireva suniścitam /
yasmānmadbhaktiyuktā tvam tato'haṃ tvāmupasthitah // 31

29-31. As soon as Bhakti emerges (takes shape, sprouts, is kindled, is ignited, strikes its roots) in one's heart, one can experience my true form, and those who are fortunate enough to once experience me (i.e. realise my existence and witness my presence on the screen of their heart-mind complex), do attain emancipation and salvation in this birth (life) itself without any doubt (29).

Hence, it is thus unequivocally established and proved beyond doubt that the only means and the easiest path of emancipation and salvation is sincere and unwavering devotion and dedication (Bhakti) for me. Those who follow the first path (verse no. 22) are able to acquire access to the rest of the paths automatically without difficulty. [That is, if one has contact with true, holy and pious saints and interacts with them, then the rest of the virtues that lead to me would come to him on their own. The obvious reason is the maxim 'one becomes like the company he keeps'.] (30). As a result, they are sure to get the double benefit of devotion as well as emancipation and salvation simultaneously. Since you are endowed with my pure and sincere Bhakti, it is the reason why I have come to you (31).

इतो मद्दर्शान्मुक्तिस्तव नास्त्यत्र संशयः। यदि जानासि मे ब्रूहि सीता कमललोचना॥ ३२॥

कुत्रास्ते केन वा नीता प्रिया मे प्रियदर्शना ॥३३॥

ito maddarśanānmuktistava nāstyatra saṁśayaḥ /
yadi jānāsi me brūhi sitā kamalalocanā // 32
kutrāste kena vā nītā priyā me priyadarśanā // 33

32-33. Now that you have had my Darshan (divine and august view), your emancipation and salvation are indeed assured—there is no doubt about it. If you know, then do tell me the whereabouts of the lotus-eyed Sita (32).

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Canto 2.4

Kishkindha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-35. Here, Lord Ram has taught Tara, the wife of Baali, the king of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, who was the elder brother of Sugriv.

इत्येवं विलपन्तीं तां तारां रामो महामनाः। सान्त्वयामास दयया तत्त्वज्ञानोपदेशतः॥ १२॥
किं भीरु शोचसि व्यर्थं शोकस्याविषयं पतिम्। पतिस्तवायं देहो वा जीवो वा वद तत्त्वतः॥ १३॥
पञ्चात्मको जडो देहस्त्वङ्मांसरुधिरस्थिमान्। कालकर्मगुणोत्पन्नः सोऽप्यास्तेऽद्यापि ते पुरः॥ १४॥

ityevaṁ vilapantiṁ tāṁ tārāṁ rāmo mahāmanāḥ /
sāntvayāmāsa dayayā tattvajñānopadeśataḥ // 12
kiṁ bhīru śocasi vyarthaṁ śokasyāviṣayaṁ patim /
patistavāyaṁ deho vā jīvo vā vada tattvataḥ // 13
pañcātmako jaḍo dehastvañmāṁsarudhirāsthimān /
kālakarmaguṇotpannaḥ so'pyāste'dyāpi te puraḥ // 14

12-14. Sri Ram consoled the lamenting and mourning Tara by preaching her 'Tatwa Gyan' (i.e. the wisdom, deep insight and truthful knowledge about the essential truths/reality of this existence) (12). He said—'Oh you timid and recreant one! Your husband is not worthy to be lamented and mourned for. Why do you lament and grieve for him? Think properly and tell me who is your real husband—this body that is lying in your front, or the Jiva (the soul, the Atma, the life giving force or pure consciousness inside the creature) which resides in it? (13).

(If this gross body is your husband, then—) It is made of the five gross elements (air, fire, water, earth, sky) and consists of skin, flesh, blood and bones. It has been born (created) out of a combination of such factors as time and circumstance, deeds and actions (and their effects), and the inherent qualities, virtues and characteristics of a creature in their various permutations and combinations. And that gross body is still lying in front of you (14).

मन्यसे जीवमात्मानं जीवस्तर्हि निरामयः। न जायते न म्रियते न तिष्ठति न गच्छति॥ १५॥
 न स्त्री पुमान्वा षण्ढो वा जीवः सर्वगतोऽव्ययः। एक एवाद्वितीयोऽयमाकाशवदलेपकः।
 नित्यो ज्ञानमयः शुद्धः सं कथं शोकमर्हति॥ १६॥

manyase jīvamātmānaṃ jīvastarhi nirāmayah /
 na jāyate na mriyate na tiṣṭhati na gacchati // 15
 na strī pumānvā ṣaṇḍho vā jīvaḥ sarvagato'vyayah /
 eka evādvitīyo'yamākāśavadalepakah /
 nityo jñānamayah śuddhaḥ sa katham śokamarhati // 16

15-16. And, on the contrary, if you regard the Jiva (the soul, the living entity or conscious factor) as your husband, then Jiva is eternal, changeless and without any blemishes or faults. It neither takes birth nor dies; it neither remains steady and unmoving nor comes and goes (15).

Jiva (the soul, Atma) is all-pervading and is imperishable, without decay and without an end or beginning. It is neither a male, nor a female, nor a genderless hermaphrodite. But, at the same time, it is peerless, matchless and unique; it remains untarnished, unaffected and without faults, blemishes and attachments like the sky; it is eternal, truthful and everlasting; it is an embodiment of wisdom, truthful knowledge and enlightenment; and it is pure and uncorrupted. Then how can it be worthy of lamentation, mourning, grief, regret and remorse of any kind' (16).

देहोऽचित्काष्ठवद्राम जीवो नित्यश्चिदात्मकः। सुखदुःखादिसम्बन्धः कस्य स्याद्राम मे वद॥ १७॥

tārovāca

deho'citkāṣṭhavadrāma jīvo nityaścidātmakah /
 sukhaduḥkhādisambandhaḥ kasya syādrāma me vada // 17

17. Tara asked, 'The body is inanimate and perishable like a piece of wood, while the Jiva (soul, Atma, pure consciousness) is eternal and conscious. It cannot be destroyed. Then tell me, with what or with whom does one have the so-called 'different relationships' which causes so much sorrows and happiness to him?' (17).

श्रीराम उवाच

अहङ्कारादिसम्बन्धो यावद्देहेन्द्रियैः सह। संसारस्तावदेव स्यादात्मनस्त्वविवेकिनः॥ १८॥
 मिथ्यारोपितसंसारो न स्वयं विनिवर्तते। विष्यान्ध्यायमानस्य स्वप्ने मिथ्यागमो यथा॥ १९॥

śrīrāma uvāca

ahaṅkāraḍisambandho yāvaddehendriyaiḥ saha /
 saṁsārastāvadeva syādātmanastvavivekinaḥ // 18
 mithyāropitasamśāro na svayaṃ vinivartate /
 viṣayāndhyāyamānasya svapne mithyāgamo yathā // 19

18-19. Sri Ram replied—'As long as one has any relationship or attachment with the body and the sense organs that arouses the notion of Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness) in him about his body as being 'his' or his 'self', and which is incumbent and inherent with the false perception of 'I', 'me', 'mine' etc. in relation with the body, the Jiva (the living being) is ignorant of the difference (distinction) between the 'Atma' (pure consciousness; soul) and 'Anatma' (that which is not 'Atma'). In other words, the creature is ignorant and unaware of the truth about what is real and what is unreal. This results in relationships that are the causes of happiness and sorrows in the world (because these relationships are limited to the body and not to the soul; and once the creature separates himself from the body, such relationships cease to have any relevance for him) (18).

The world has been falsely imposed on the Atma (i.e. it is erroneous to treat the world as having any truthful essence, life and consciousness—which are the hallmarks of the Atma—in it simply because it shows virtual signs of activity and life as if it had Atma or was a personification of the Atma). In other words, the Atma has been erroneously identified with the so-called 'living' or animate world. But it (i.e. this misconception, delusion, ignorance, lack of truthful knowledge about the reality and truth behind the façade of illusion) is not removed without the emergence of Gyan (wisdom, deep insight and truthful knowledge, enlightenment). It is similar to the case where a person, who constantly thinks about the pleasure of the sense organs or about this materialistic world, dreams of it while asleep, but these dreams are nothing but an illusory image, a mirage or a misleading deception created by the power of his sub-conscious mind to imagine (19).

अनाद्यविद्यासम्बन्धात्कार्याहंकृतेस्तथा । संसारोऽपार्थकोऽपि स्याद्भागद्वेषादिसङ्कुलः ॥ २० ॥

मन एव हि संसारो बन्धश्चैव मनः शुभे । आत्मा मनः समानत्वमेत्य तद्गतबन्धभाक् ॥ २१ ॥

anādyavidyāsambandhāttatkāryāhaṅkṛtestathā /
saṁsāro'pārthako'pi syādrāgadveṣādisaṅkulaḥ // 20
mana eva hi saṁsāro bandhaścaiva manaḥ śubhe /
ātmā manaḥ samānatvametya tadgatabandhabhāk // 21

20-21. Endless ignorance and its resultant involvement in various actions and deeds that are steeped in ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness governs the working of this world which, inspite of being false and totally illusory, still is full of the notions of attachments, infatuations, yearnings, desires etc. as well as of enmity, discord, malice, hatred, envy, jealousy etc.¹ (20).

Oh the blessed and auspicious one! It is the Mana (heart and mind; the emotions and thoughts; the inclinations and dispositions; the intentions and purpose; the wishes and desires of the creature) that creates or imagines or is the harbinger of this mundane world as well as its entanglements² (21).

[Note—¹Ignorance of the falsehood of this world prevents a creature from indulging in it, because he thinks that 'he' is doing such and such deed with the body which he treats as his own and his

real identity. This sets off a chain of events, whereby he expects a result for his efforts and wants to enjoy them or feels that he is suffering from them, and thereby gets hooked to this endless chain. Then, there would definitely be some unfulfilled things that he yearns to do next, and that 'next' never ends. He feels proud of his achievements and regrets his misadventures, which traps him in the snare of false happiness and false sorrows. He forgets, in his ignorance, that the world which seems so real is perishable and it can never provide him with either eternal happiness or sorrows, for these are like a see-saw, rising and declining in an endless oscillation.

²The world as well as its entanglements and attachments are only due to the activity of the Mana as defined above, and are the function of the mind and the heart. That is, the mind visualises that there is something called world and gets involved in it emotionally using the medium of the heart, though the intelligence and discriminatory faculty will tell the Jiva that all the world and its incumbent attachments and relations are false and deceptive. The involvement of the discriminatory intellect is the field of Gyan, which tells the creature to think and then decide what the truth is.]

यथा विशुद्धः स्फटिकोऽलक्तकादिसमीपगः। तत्तद्वर्णयुगाभाति वस्तुतो नास्ति रज्जनम्॥ २२॥

बुद्धीन्द्रियादिसामीप्यादात्मनः संसृतिर्वलात्। आत्मा स्वलिङ्गं तु मनः परिगृह्य तदुद्भवान्॥ २३॥

कामान् जुषन् गुणैर्बद्धः संसारे वर्ततेऽवशः। आदौ मनोगुणान् सृष्ट्वा ततः कर्माण्यनेकधा॥ २४॥

yathā viśuddhaḥ sphaṭiko'laktakādisamīpagaḥ /
tattadvarṇayugābhāti vastuto nāsti rañjanam // 22
buddhīndriyādisāmīpyādātmanaḥ saṁsṛtirbalāt /
ātmā svaliṅgaṁ tu manaḥ pariḡṛhya tadudbhavān // 23
kāmaṁ juṣaṇ guṇairbaddhaḥ saṁsāre vartate'vaśaḥ /
ādau manoguṇān sṛṣṭvā tataḥ karmāṇyanekadhā // 24

22-24. Even as the crystal/quartz (Sfatik), though being inherently pure and clear in hue (shade and colour), appears to be of the dark colour of the resinous substance called Lac when in contact with it, inspite of the fact that it (the crystal or quartz) does not have any such colour of its own, the Atma (the subtle, sublime, ethereal, pure, conscious, eternal Soul) mistakenly identifies itself with and believes in the existence of the world when it comes in contact with the Buddhi (the mind-intellect complex) and Indris (the sense organs of the body), resulting in the Atma being ensnared in the trap of sorrows and happiness generated by the latter.

. Atma, having once accepted the existence of the mind-heart complex called the subtle body of the creature, gets influenced by this company. The stimuli (inputs) that the mind receives from the external world through the different organs of perception, effects or influences the Atma to such an extent that it starts to enjoy or suffer from these stimuli (even as one is invariably influenced by the company that he keeps). As a result, it gets tied down (or bogged down) by characters such as 'Raag' (attachments, infatuations, desires) and 'Dwesh' (enmity, ill-will, malice, envy, jealousy etc.) which are so typical of this world, and remains shackled to them and keeps swirling in the whirlpool created by them in the form of this world.

In the beginning, the Atma visualises the existence of such emotions and notions in the world as Raag and Dwesh (as defined above), and then creates the various characteristics of the Mana (mind-heart complex as defined above) based upon and in

consonant to these perceptions. Then by the aggregate combination (i.e. various permutations and combinations) of these, it does (gets involved in doing) so many deeds (22-24).

[Note—The Atma would have been better off if it had not allowed itself to believe the mind and the heart. They mislead it even as a king is mislead by unwise ministers. The mind and heart make the Atma fall in the trap of false beliefs because it sees the world through the prism of the mind and the heart. If on the contrary it had relied on wisdom or Gyan, it would have seen through the delusion and the trap into which it is falling inadvertently.]

शुक्ललोहितकृष्णानि गतयस्तत्समानतः। एवं कर्मवशाज्जीवो भ्रमत्याभूतसम्प्लवम्॥ २५॥

śuklalohitakṛṣṇāni gatayastatsamānataḥ /
evaṃ karmavaśājīvo bhramatyābhūtasamplavam // 25

25. The deeds are of three types—viz. ‘Shukla’ (literally white or pure, which is a metaphor for righteous and auspicious deeds, e.g. repetition of the holy name of the Lord, spiritualism, meditation, sacrifices and other righteous deeds and noble actions etc.), ‘red coloured’ (or rust coloured, indicative of blood and violence, e.g. sacrifice involving animal slaughter), and ‘Krishna’ (literally dark, which is a metaphor for things that are unrighteous and unholy, e.g. drinking, indulgences etc.). The destiny of the Atma is according to these deeds (which are called Satvic, Rajsic and Tamsic respectively). In this manner the creature (Jiva) keeps falling in the endless cycle of birth and death till the time of dooms-day (25).

सर्वोपसंहृतौ जीवौ वासनाभिः स्वकर्मभिः। अनाद्यविद्यावशागस्तिष्ठत्यभिनिवेशतः॥२६॥
सृष्टिकाले पुनः पूर्ववासनामानसैः सह। जायते पुनरप्येवं घटीयन्त्रमिवावशः॥ २७॥

sarvopasaṃhṛtau jīvo vāsanābhiḥ svakarmabhiḥ /
anādyavidyāvaśagastiṣṭhatyabhiniveśataḥ // 26
srṣṭikāle punaḥ pūrvavāsanāmānasaiḥ saha /
jāyate punarapyevaṃ ghaṭīyantramivāvaśaḥ // 27

26-27. Even at the time of dooms-day when all the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, sky) which make up this visible world are dissolved in one single homogenous entity, the Atma along with its accumulated wealth of action/deeds and their consequences, its unfilled desires, yearnings and wishes, its inherent inclinations and tendencies that have characterised it so far, remains sheathed (covered, enveloped) in a shell of eternal ignorance (just like creatures hibernate in the arctic circle during severe winters when the earth is covered with ice, only to jump back to life when the circumstances become favourable to foster life) (26).

When the new universe is created, it is reborn under compulsions of its previous desires and inherent inclinations and tendencies (which had encased/sheathed it in the form of ignorance during the period of hibernation between the end of the last creation and the emergence of the new creation) like a clock-work (27).

यदा पुण्यविशेषेण लभते सङ्गतिं सताम्। मद्भक्तानां सुशान्तानां तदा मद्दिषया मतिः॥ २८॥
मत्कथाश्रवणे श्रद्धा दुर्लभा जायते ततः। ततः स्वरूपविज्ञानमनायासेन जायते॥ २९॥

yadā puṇyaviśeṣeṇa labhate saṅgatiṁ satām /
madbhaktānāṁ suśāntānāṁ tadā madviṣayā matiḥ // 28
matkathāśravaṇe śraddhā durlabhā jāyate tataḥ /
tataḥ svarūpavijñānamanāyāsena jāyate // 29

28-29. When due to the ripening or maturity of some auspicious noble deeds done by the Atma it has the opportunity of communion (contact, interaction) with my devotees or great souls who are inherently calm, serene and tranquil, then it gets an opportunity to divert its mind, heart and intellect away from the world and concentrate or focus it on me (28).

This creates (ignites) its interest in my divine stories, which is very difficult in the first instance. By hearing my divine stories and having faith, conviction and firm belief in them, it (the creature, the Atma) comes to know (realise) about my truthful form and nature (29).

[Note :- Verse nos. 28-29 describe how, after all, the creature can break free of this endless cycle—it is done by diverting the mind from the pleasures of the senses towards spiritualism through the medium of divine stories about the glories of the Lord Sri Ram.]

तदाचार्यप्रसादेन वाक्यार्थज्ञानतः क्षणात्। देहेन्द्रियमनः प्राणाहङ्कृतिभ्यः पृथक्स्थितम्॥ ३०॥
स्वात्मानुभवतः सत्यमानन्दात्मानमद्वयम्। ज्ञात्वा सद्यो भवेन्मुक्तः सत्यमेव मयोदितम्॥ ३१॥

tadācāryaprasādena vākyārthajñānataḥ kṣaṇāt /
dehendriyamanāḥ prāṇāhaṅkṛtibhyaḥ pṛthaksthitam // 30
svātmānubhavataḥ satyamānandātmānamadvayam /
jñātvā sadyo bhavenmuktaḥ satyameva mayoditam // 31

30-31. At that time, either due to the influence of the profound teachings and graceful blessings of the creature's Guru regarding the essential 'great truths' and their basic meanings (see Uttar Kand, canto 5, verse nos. 24-27 and Baal Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 40-41 and its foot note), or by experiencing them first hand, the creature (the Jiva) begins to realise that its Atma (i.e. pure consciousness, the microcosmic soul), which is an embodiment of supreme bliss, peace and tranquility, is separate and distinct from the gross body, the sense organs, the mind-heart complex, the life giving winds, as well as other extraneous influences such as the notion of having Ahankar (pride, ego, vanity, arrogance and haughtiness) etc. As a result, it is liberated and freed from the shackles tying it down to the deluding, artificial, entrapping mundane world (i.e. the creature gets emancipation and salvation of its soul). Oh Tara! I have told you the real and absolute truth (30-31).

[Note :- The emphasis here is on realising that Atma, the microcosmic fraction of the eternal, blissful supreme macrocosmic Soul is distinct from all other things compositely called this mundane world, including the body (gross and subtle) of the creature.]

एवं मयोदितं सम्यगालोचयति योऽनिशम्। तस्य संसारदुःखानि न स्पृशन्ति कदाचन॥ ३२॥
त्वमप्येतन्मया प्रोक्तमालोचय विशुद्धधीः। न स्पृश्यसे दुःखजालैः कर्मबन्धाद्विमोक्ष्यसे॥ ३३॥

evaṃ mayoditaṃ samyagālocayati yo'niśam /
tasya saṃsāraduḥkhāni na spr̥śyanti kadācana // 32
tvamapyetanmayā proktamālocaya viśuddhadhīḥ /
na spr̥śyase duḥkhajālaiḥ karmabandhādvimokṣyase // 33

32-33. Those who constantly contemplate on this spiritual knowledge that I have just described to you with wisdom and deep insight, are not troubled or touched by any of the sorrows associated with this world (32).

You should also think deeply about this teaching of mine with a pure, uncorrupted mind. By doing this, sorrows, miseries, grief, troubles and tribulations of all kinds that are associated with the world will never touch you or bother you. You will be freed from the fetters originating from the deeds done by you (i.e. the deeds done by the body and their entangling web of reactions and counter reactions) (33).

पूर्वजन्मनि ते सुभ्रु कृता मद्भक्तिरुत्तमा। अतस्तव विमोक्षाय रूपं मे दर्शितं शुभे॥ ३४॥
ध्यात्वा मद्रूपमनिशमालोचय मयोदितम्। प्रवाहपतितं कार्यं कुर्वन्त्यपि न लिप्यसे॥ ३५॥

pūrvajanmani te subhru kṛtā madbhaktiruttamā /
atastava vimokṣāya rūpaṃ me darśitaṃ śubhe // 34
dhyātvā madrūpamaniśamālocaya mayoditaṃ /
pravāhapatitaṃ kāryaṃ kurvatyapi na lipyase // 35

34-35. Oh the auspicious one with pleasant eye-brows! In your previous birth, you have had excellent devotion for me. So, oh the auspicious one! I have given you my Darshan in order to provide you with liberation and deliverance from this mundane, deluding, artificial and entangling world (34). You should remember my divine form night and day, and deeply ponder on my teachings. By doing so, even while doing the deeds that you have to do in this world as a result of your past, you shall not be attached to them (i.e. be indulgent in them)' (35)."

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Canto 2.5

Kishkindha Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 6-41. Here, Lord Ram has once again taught Laxman.

सौमित्रिरेकदा राममेकान्ते ध्यानतत्परम्। समाधिविरमे भक्त्या प्रणयाद्विनयान्वितः॥ ६॥
अब्रवीद् देव ते वाक्यात्पूर्वोक्ताद्विगतो मम। अनाद्यविद्यासम्भूतः संशयो हृदि संस्थितः॥ ७॥

saumitrirekadā rāmamekānte dhyānatatparam /
samādhivirame bhaktyā praṇayādvīnayaṅvitaḥ // 6
abravīddeva te vākyaātpūrvoktādvigato mama /
anādyavidyāsambhūtaḥ saṁśayo hṛdi saṁsthitaḥ // 7

6-7. One day, when Sri Ram had woken up from his meditative trance and was alone, the son of Sumitra (Laxman) asked him most affectionately and politely (6), 'By your teachings which you had made to me earlier, the doubts and confusions of my heart originating from eternal ignorance have been removed/eliminated (6-7).

इदानीं श्रोतुमिच्छामि क्रियामार्गेण राघव। भवदाराधनं लोके यथा कुर्वन्ति योगिनः॥ ८॥
इदमेव सदा प्राहुर्योगिनो मुक्तिसाधनम्। नारदोऽपि तथा व्यासो ब्रह्मा कमलसम्भवः॥ ९॥
ब्रह्मक्षत्रादिवर्णानामाश्रमाणां च मोक्षदम्। स्त्रीशूद्राणां च राजेन्द्र सुलभं मुक्तिसाधनम्।
तव भक्ताय मे भ्रात्रे ब्रूहि लोकोपकारकम्॥ १०॥

idānīm śrotumicchāmi kriyāmārgēṇa rāghava /
bhavadārādhanam loke yathā kurvanti yoginaḥ // 8
idameva sadā prāhuryogino muktisāadhanam /
nārado'pi tathā vyāso brahmā kamalasambhavaḥ // 9
brahmakṣatrādivarṇānāmāśramāṇāṁ ca mokṣadam /
strīśūdrāṇāṁ ca rājendra sulabham muktisāadhanam /
tava bhaktāya me bhrātre brūhi lokopakārakam // 10

8-10. But oh Raghav (Sri Ram), I want to hear about the method and the way by which the Yogis (ascetics) worship, honour and adore you in this world, the path generally known as 'Kriya Marg' (system of worship incorporating physical rituals) (8).

All the ascetics, (the celestial sage) Narad, (the great sage) Vyas as well as Brahma, who was born out of a divine lotus—all of them call it as the path of getting liberation and deliverance (9).

Oh Rajendra (King of kings, i.e. Sri Ram)! According to them, this is the only mean by which emancipation and salvation can be achieved by and made possible for different 'Varans' (the four castes or classes into which the society has been classified) such as the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and others as well as the different 'Ashrams' (the four phases into which the life of a man has been divided, such as Brahmacharis etc.)¹. Even

women and Shudras (the low castes) can also achieve emancipation and salvation easily by following this path of worship. I am your ardent devotee and beloved brother. So you should be kind enough to describe those means (ways and methods of Kriya Yog) to me as a measure of public welfare and good' (10).

[Note--¹The society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins —the learned and teaching class; they also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas —they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas —they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life, and (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

The life of a man is divided into four segments or Ashrams — (a) Brahmacharya —this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style, (b) Grihastha —when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the second phase called Grihastha Ashram which is a householder life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life and dealings with this deceptive world with all their accompanying horrifying problems, (c) Vanaprastha —this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas —this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and meditation, living a life of total renunciation and begging for food, and single mindedly aiming for emancipation and salvation.]

श्रीराम उवाच

मम पूजाविधानस्य नान्तोऽस्ति रघुनन्दन। तथापि वक्ष्ये संक्षेपाद्यथावदनुपूर्वशः॥ ११॥

स्वगृहोक्तप्रकारेण द्विजत्वं प्राप्य मानवः। सकाशात्सद्गुरोर्मन्त्रं लब्ध्वा मद्भक्तिसंयुतः॥ १२॥

śrīrāma uvāca

mama pūjāvidhānasya nānto'sti raghunandana /
tathāpi vakṣye saṅkṣepādyathāvadanupūrvaśaḥ // 11
svagrhyoktaprakāreṇa dvijatvaṁ prāpya mānavaḥ /
sakāśātsadgurormantraṁ labdhvā madbhaktisaṁyutaḥ // 12

11-12. Sri Ram replied (i.e. preached to Laxman), 'Oh Raghunandan (the son of king Raghu's clan; Laxman)! There is no end to the methods of worshipping, adoring and

honouring me, of paying obeisance and respect to me, or showing reverence and veneration for me. In spite of that, I am describing them to you, as they are, in brief (11).

A person endowed (inspired, infused) with my Bhakti (sincere devotion, faith, belief, admiration, dedication, submission, reverence and affection for the Lord) should first observe all the formal sacraments to get himself formally initiated into the particular section and class of society to which he belongs, and then go to (approach) a Guru (an attained, realised, learned, truthful and honest moral preceptor) with sincerity, faith and devotion towards him. Then he should accept a Mantra (holy name of the Lord; a group of divine syllables or word symbols which have divine mystical powers) from him (12).

तेन सन्दर्शितविधिर्ममेवाराधयेत्सुधीः। हृदये वानले वार्चेत्प्रतिमादौ विभावसौ॥ १३॥

tena sandarśitavidhirmāmevārādhayetsudhīḥ /
hṛdaye vānale vārcetpratimādaū vibhāvasau // 13

13. Then that wise person should worship, revere and adore no one else but me in his heart (while meditating and contemplating), in the sacred fire (while performing fire sacrifices), in an idol/image (while worshipping in any shrine), or the Sun (as in offering oblations to the rising and setting sun) etc. by the method shown by his Guru (13).

[Note :- It means that he should visualise me or focus his attention on me while adopting any of the methods of formal worship— whether it is a fire, an idol, a portrait, the sun, et-al. For all practical purposes he is worshipping me in all those symbols of my myriad divine forms.]

शालग्रामशिलायं वा पूजयेन्मामतन्द्रितः। प्रातःस्नानं प्रकुर्वीत प्रथमं देहशुद्धये॥ १४॥
वेदतन्त्रोदितैर्मन्त्रैर्मृल्लेपनविधानतः । सन्ध्यादि कर्म यन्नित्यं तत्कुर्याद्विधिना बुधः॥ १५॥

śālagrāmaśilāyāṃ vā pūjayenmāmatandritaḥ /
prātaḥsnānaṃ prakurvīta prathamam dehaśuddhaye // 14
vedatantraditairmantrairmṛllepanavidhānataḥ /
sandhyādi karma yannityaṃ tatkuryādvīdhinā budhaḥ // 15

14-15. He should worship me in a 'Shaligram stone' if for some reason the above form of worship is not possible. Wise worshippers should first purify (cleanse) their bodies by applying (rubbing) clay or earth etc. on their bodies and then having a bath in the early morning while chanting holy Mantras (hymns) from the Vedas or magical chants from the Tantras (a religious treatise supposed to be compiled by Lord Shiva which contains mystical formulas for the attainment of super natural powers). After that, he should do his routine, daily rituals of worship, such as observing the sacrament of Sandhya etc. (a special ritual done by the Aryans three times a day—in the morning, midday and at sunset) (14-15).

[Note to verse no. 14 :- A Shaligram stone is generally smooth, oblong or egg-shaped—in fact it symbolises the featureless, attributeless, formless vision of the Lord. A stone is regarded as an inanimate object signifying the fact that the Supreme Being does not 'do' anything 'himself'. It is the conviction and firmness of faith that transforms that inanimate piece of stone into an image or

reflection of the supreme Lord Sri Ram, complete with all his mystical and divine powers and potentials. The Lord's Maya or delusion creating powers makes that lifeless stone, which is inherently and obviously a 'non-doer' of anything, appear to be the 'doer' of so many deeds. In other words, that piece of stone acquires stupendous mystical powers and prowess possessed by the supreme Lord who is the creator, the sustainer and the annihilator of the world.

Further as the fine line dividing the treatment of that stone as a mere piece of pebble and it being the representative form of the Viraat Purush is governed by firmness of faith, belief and conviction. It is this same virtue that separates a Mantra from being divine, mystical, holy and pure, and being endowed with stupendous powers that can achieve great objectives, as opposed to being just a jumble of lifeless letters or meaningless words.

The very form of the Shaligram—which is generally smooth to touch, dark in colour, and oval, oblong or round in shape—indicates the concept of the cosmic ovum or egg that harbours the entire world in it in a hidden form. In itself any egg possesses all the necessary requirements that are basically needed to initiate and sustain the process of life, but left to its own devices it is absolutely inert and cannot show any sign of hidden life in it. But when it is fertilised with the life-injecting sperm symbolising faith, belief, devotion and conviction, it assumes the powers to unfold this huge, vast expanse of the universe, both at the macro level in the form of the Viraat Purush who, in association with his infinite cosmic energy, is synonymous with Nature, and at the micro level in the form of the individual creature.

So we can deduce safely that the Shaligram stone is the whole cosmos in a miniature form. And by worshipping it as a representative of the supreme Lord, we are actually worshipping his nameless, formless, attributeless and indefinable form.]

सङ्कल्पमादौ कुर्वीत सिद्ध्यर्थं कर्मणां सुधीः। स्वगुरुं पूजयेद्भक्त्या मद्बुद्ध्या पूजको मम॥ १६॥

शिलायां स्नपनं कुर्यात्प्रतिमासु प्रमार्जनम्। प्रसिद्धैर्गन्धपुष्पाद्यैर्मत्पूजा सिद्धिदायिका॥ १७॥

saṅpalpamādaḥ kurvīta siddhyartham karmaṇāṃ sudhīḥ /
svagurum pūjayedbhaktyā madbuddhyā pūjako mama // 16
śilāyaṃ snapanam kuryātpṛatimāsu pramārjanam /
prasiddhairgandhapuṣpādyairmatpūjā siddhidāyikā // 17

16-17. Those wise persons who wish to worship me should first make a firm resolve/vow about the deeds or objectives that he wants to accomplish successfully. Then, treating his Guru as being no different from me, he should worship him with due devotion (16).

If my idol is like a stone (e.g. Shaligram), then it should be bathed (with water or milk), but if it is like a consecrated image (as found in temples), then it should be sponged (wiped) with a wet cloth and dried using a dry cloth. Then it should be duly worshipped by using available pleasant and auspicious scents (fragrances) and flowers. My worship done in this manner is quick to give rewards and show their auspicious results (17).

[Note :- (i) Careful analysis of verse no. 16 clears the doubt about why a person should revere his Guru—the Guru is worshipped as a representative or embodiment of Sri Ram. In fact, the worshipping is done of Sri Ram and not of the person of the Guru par-se. That the obeisance and adoration shown by the worshipper towards his Guru—who in this case is in the role of Sri Ram—goes to the latter's head and makes him arrogant and haughty and stokes his ego of being someone special, is no fault of the concept or doctrine as enshrined in this verse, and neither is it

the fault of the seeker. (ii) The three entities of worship according to verse nos. 16-17 are—(a) the Guru, (b) the Shaligram and (c) the idol/image of the Lord all representing the supreme Brahm.]

अमायिकोऽनुवृत्त्या मां पूजयेन्नियतव्रतः। प्रतिमादिष्वलङ्कारः प्रियो मे कुलनन्दन॥ १८॥
अग्नौ यजेत हविषा भास्करे स्थण्डिले यजेत्। भक्तेनोपहतं प्रीत्यै श्रद्धया मम वार्यपि॥ १९॥
किं पुनर्भक्ष्यभोज्यादि गन्धपुष्पाक्षतादिकम्। पूजाद्रव्याणि सर्वाणि सम्पाद्यैवं समारभेत्॥ २०॥

amāyiko'nuvṛtṭyā māṃ pūjayenniyatavrataḥ /
pratimādiṣvalaṅkāraḥ priyo me kulanandana // 18
agnau yajeta haviṣā bhāskare sthaṇḍile yajet /
bhaktenopahṛtaṃ prītyai śraddhayā mama vāryapi // 19
kiṃ punarbhakṣyabhojyādi gandhapuṣpākṣatādikam /
pūjādravyāṇi sarvāṇi sampādyaiṣaṃ samārabhet // 20

18-20. A man should forsake all imposter, conceit, deceit, pretensions, stratagem, fraud, deceptions, tricks and duplicity, and worship, adore and honour me regularly by the method prescribed (advised, shown) by the Guru. Oh Kulnandan (the honourable son of our clan; Laxman)! Decorating idols etc. are most dear (pleasing) to me (because it helps to inculcate affection for me and my divine form) (18).

(If one does not want to worship/adore/honour me in a lifeless stone idol, or cannot come to terms with this sort of worship/adoration/honour—) If he wishes to worship me in the sacred fire, then it should be done by offerings of sacrifices to the holy fire. And if one wants to worship me in the Sun, then a design of the Sun should be made in the worship.

Even simple water offered to me by my devotee (with sincerity, humility and dedication) causes immense happiness to me i.e. I am very pleased with it, and such a devotee is very dear to me (19), then what to talk of those who worship me by elaborate offerings, eatables etc. as well as by the use of costly herbs, scents, fragrances, beautiful flowers, rice and other materials and paraphernalia required for formal ritual of worship. (It is but natural that all these things do please me when I am so pleased by simple water!). So, the worshipper should assemble all the paraphernalia and accoutrements before starting the process of formally worshipping me. (20).

[Note :- Verse no. 19 eliminates the necessity of elaborate offerings to the Lord in order to worship, adore and honour him. A humble cup of water offered with love and affection to Sri Ram is valued more by him than a truck load of gems and jewels, so to speak. Further, it should be noted that Sri Ram himself has said that there is no fixed, binding, sacrosanct and inviolable law or rule for worship—nothing is sacrosanct except faith, belief, conviction, sincerity, humility, devotion, love, affection and dedication. There are many ways to worship the Lord—through the medium of the Guru, the idol, the image, the Shaligram, the fire sacrifice, the Sun, or even by offering of as humble a thing as water, or elaborate rituals with chanting of great Mantras, great fire sacrifices involving huge riches and liberal doses of offerings and costly paraphernalia. Nevertheless, everything depends on the mental caliber of the devotee or seeker, whether he intends to show the world that he is a great worshipper of the Lord, or whether he worships his Lord as his personal affair as one has with one's loved and dear ones. One medicine cannot suit all the patients, and the Lord also rewards them according to the form and intent of the worship.

So, dogmas and pretensions, showmanship and lack of sincerity have no place in love for Sri Ram. Everyone is free and at liberty to worship and revere him in the way he likes—as long as devotion, submission, dedication and firm conviction is present. Please see the following verse no. 30 below which says so explicitly.]

चैलाजिनकुशैः सम्यगासनं परिकल्पयेत्। तत्रोपविश्य देवस्य सम्मुखे शुद्धमानसः॥ २१॥
ततो न्यासं प्रकुर्वीत मातृकाबहिरान्तरम्। केशवादि ततः कुर्यात्तत्त्वन्यासं ततः परम्॥ २२॥
मन्मूर्तिपञ्चरन्यासं मन्त्रन्यासं ततो न्यसेत्। प्रतिमादावपि तथा कुर्यान्नित्यमतन्द्रितः॥ २३॥

cailājinakuśaiḥ samyagāsanam parikalpayet /
tatropaviśya devasya sammukhe suddhamānasah // 21
tato nyāsam prakūrvīta mātṛkābahirāntaram /
keśavādi tataḥ kūr्याttattvanyāsam tataḥ param // 22
manmūrtipañjaranyāsam mantranyāsam tato nyaset /
pratimādāvapi tathā kuryānnityamatandritaḥ // 23

21-23. [Sri Ram now describes the detailed step by step process to be followed during the ritualistic process of formal worship. It is to be noted that it is based on the ‘Karma Kaand’ as prescribed in the Vedas. The Lord has already stated previously in verse no.19 that he does not require elaborate exercises to be pleased and be merciful and gracious on his devotees, for even water offered with devotion and faith is sufficient to please him in the absence of all the elaborate paraphernalia and accoutrements required for elaborate rituals. However, the formal process is as follows—]

To begin with, one should make a seat by laying grass, deer skin and cloth (one on top of the other in above sequence), and sit on it in front of the ‘God or the personal deity to be worshipped’, called a person's ‘Ishta Deva’ (literally, the personal God; the family deity or the favourite Lord) with a purified, uncorrupted, undistracted and focused mind (21).

After that, one should invoke the external gross forms as well as the internal subtle forms of the great Mothers, called ‘Matrikas’¹, and do ‘Nyas’² with them (which is to submit a pledge before them of concentrating and establishing one's mind on worshipping of the chosen deity. Then he should invoke and meditate upon the twenty divine names of the Lord such as Keshav etc.

Next, he should meditate and contemplate upon the ‘Tatwa’ and invest the deity with it. [These are the essential and fundamental principles, virtues and elements that are to be invoked and worshipped in that deity or entity which the person endeavours to honour and adore] (22).

After that, he should mentally establish and endow the image of the deity with a skeleton and pledge trust in its divine and sublime body.

Next, when the gross idol or the lifeless image of the deity has already been mentally endowed with a gross body having a skeleton and possessing mystical powers represented by the establishment of the divine Mothers and the Tatwa in it like that of an incarnation or manifestation of the Lord himself, the worshipper should invest it with life by symbolically injecting it in by the use of Mantras meant for this purpose.³

This process of consecration of the idol or image of the Lord should be done without any laziness and indolence. In a similar manner, he should concentrate and firmly imagine my presence in other mediums such as portraits etc. (23)

[Note :-¹The word 'Matrika' means the divine Mothers representing the cosmic energy in creation. Their worship is deemed essential in Tantra worship. These Mothers are the following seven---Brahmi, Maheshwari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamunda. Their external forms refers to their forms as the female counterparts of the seven divine Gods, while their subtle forms refer to the elementary virtues that they represent, such as the power to create (Brahmi), the power to supersede all and bring to an end/conclude/abort other powers (Maheshwari), the virtues of virgin chastity and immaculate purity (Kaumari), the powers of sustenance, providing nourishment and bringing about development (Vaishnavi), the power to dive into the unknown and rescue all that is good, righteous and auspicious (Varahi), the power to rule over the rest of the creation as its queen (Indrani), and the power required to face enemies and adversities (Chamunda).

²The word 'Nyas' refers to concentration, meditation, focusing the attention on a particular thing as per established and prescribed procedure. In this case, it is to visualise the supreme Lord in the idol or statue or portrait etc.

³This process replicates the process that occurred at the time of creation when the Viraat Purush created man in his image, and all the Gods representing the various vital functions of life entered the gross body of the man as the vital winds and other elementary functions. But at the end, the Viraat had to enter that man himself as his Pran to enable the lifeless body to get up and move about as a living man.]

कलशं स्वपुरो वामे क्षिपेत्पुष्पादि दक्षिणे। अर्घ्यपाद्यप्रदानार्थं मधुपर्कार्थमेव च॥ २४॥
तथैवाचमनार्थं तु न्यसेत्पात्रचतुष्टयम्। हृत्पद्मे भानुविमले मत्कलां जीवसंज्ञिताम्॥ २५॥
ध्यायेत्स्वदेहमखिलं तया व्याप्तमरिन्दम्। तामेवावाहयेन्नित्यं प्रतिमादिषु मत्कलाम्॥ २६॥

kalaśaṃ svapuro vāme kṣipetpuṣpādi dakṣiṇe /
arghyapādyapradānārthaṃ madhuparkārhameva ca // 24
tathaiṣācamanārthaṃ tu nyasetpātracatuṣṭayam /
hr̥tpadme bhānuvimale matkalāṃ jīvasaṃjñitām // 25
dhyāyetsvadehamakhilaṃ tayā vyāptamarindama /
tāmevāvāhayennityaṃ pratimādiṣu matkalām // 26

24-26. One should keep in front of him a Kalash (a water pot or pitcher) on the left hand side, and flowers etc. on the right side. Similarly, four vessels should be kept for the purpose of offering 'Arghya' (i.e. an offering fit to be offered to God; the vessel used for this purpose is usually boat shaped), 'Padya' (i.e. the water with which the feet of God or any revered person is washed), 'Madhu Purk' (i.e. sweets, such as honey) and 'Aachman' (i.e. the rinsing of the mouth by water before the beginning of religious ceremonies; here the water is sipped using a very small wooden spatula as a mere formality) (24).

Thence, one should meditate upon my conscious, microcosmic, subtle form as the 'Jiva' (Atma or soul of the living being) in his heart which is shaped like a divine lotus and is as pure, brilliant and radiant as the sun (25).

Oh the vanquisher of enemies! Then one should perceive (conceptualize, imagine) that his whole body is infused, imbued, soaked and pervaded by that vital life imparting vitality and force called the conscious Jiva (i.e. his whole being is pulsating with life and consciousness). At the same time, the same feeling should be imagined (visualised, conceived) in the idol or portrait while worshipping it (that the Lord is present in it, pervades it; that it is not an inanimate piece of metal or stone or paper portrait but infused and injected by the glorious super consciousness) (26).

पाद्यार्धाचमनीयाद्यैः स्नानवस्त्रविभूषणैः। यावच्छक्योपचारैर्वा त्वर्चयेन्मामायया ॥ २७ ॥
विभवे सति कर्पूरकुङ्कुमागरुचन्दनैः। अर्चयेन्मन्त्रवन्नित्यं सुगन्धकुसुमैः शुभैः ॥ २८ ॥
दशावरणपूजां वै ह्यागमोक्तां प्रकारयेत्। नीराजनैर्धूपदीपैर्नैवेद्यैर्वहुविस्तरैः ॥ २९ ॥

pādyārghyācamanīyādyaiḥ snānavastravibhūṣaṇaiḥ /
yāvacchakyopacārairvā tvaṛcayenmāmamāyayā // 27
vibhave sati karpūrakuṅkumāgarucandanaiḥ /
arcayenmantravannityaṃ sugandhakusumaiḥ śubhaiḥ // 28
daśāvaraṇapūjāṃ vai hyāgamoktāṃ prakārayet /
nīrājanairdhūpadīpairnaivedyairbahuvistaraiḥ // 29

27-29. Using ‘Padya’, ‘Ardhya’, ‘Aachman’ (see verse no. 24), ‘Snan’ (i.e. ritualistic bathing of the deity), ‘Vastra’ (i.e. clothing the deity), ‘Vibushan’ (i.e. offering or decorating the deity with ornaments) etc.—or using any other material that is easily and conveniently available—one should worship me without any imposter, deception, duplicity, insincerity and deceit (27).

If he (the worshipper) is rich (or well-off), he should routinely worship me with ‘Kapur’ (camphor), ‘Kumkum’ (a red powder used on auspicious occasions), ‘Agar’ (coloured powder made from sandalwood), ‘Chandan’ (sandalwood), and most beautiful and fragrant flowers while chanting and repeating my holy Mantras (28).

Besides this, he should pay obeisance and homage to me by showing (i.e. using) ‘Nirajan’ (showing of ceremonial light consisting of five wicks), ‘Dhup’ (perfumes), ‘Deep’ (lighted oil lamps), various types of sweetmeats etc. according to the way established and sanctioned by the Vedas (29).

श्रद्धयोपहरेन्नित्यं श्रद्धाभुगहमीश्वरः। होमं कुर्यात्प्रयत्नेन विधिना मन्त्रकोविदः ॥ ३० ॥
अगस्त्येनोक्तमार्गेण कुण्डेनागमवित्तमः। जुहुयान्मूलमन्त्रेण पुंसूक्तेनाथवा बुधः ॥ ३१ ॥

śraddhayopaharennityaṃ śraddhābhugahamīśvaraḥ /
homaṃ kuryātprayatnena vidhinā mantrakovidāḥ // 30
agastyenoktamārgaṇa kuṇḍenāgamavittamaḥ /
juhuyānmūlamantreṇa puṃsūktenāthavā budhaḥ // 31

30-31. All the products (as described in previous verses) should be offered daily with great reverence and honour, because I, the supreme Lord, is hungry for respect,

reverence, veneration, honour, faith, belief, devotion, dedication and conviction more than anything else. Those who are expert in Mantras should then do 'Havan, (i.e. ritual of the fire sacrifice) properly in the sanctioned and traditional way (30).

(Describing how to do the fire sacrifice, Sri Ram elaborates—) Those who are adept in the processes established by the scriptures should make a fire pit according to the design prescribed by sage Agastya, and then offer oblations to the fire God in it by using the holy Mantras given by one's Guru. Such fire sacrifices are to be done by the males as sanctioned by the scriptures (31).

अथवौपासनाग्नौ वा चरुणा हविषा तथा। तप्तजाम्बूनदप्रख्यं दिव्याभरणभूषितम्॥ ३२॥
ध्यायेदनलमध्यस्थं होमकाले सदा बुधः। पार्षदेभ्यो बलिं दत्त्वा होमशेषं समापयेत्॥ ३३॥

athavaupāsanāgnau vā caruṇā haviṣā tathā /
taptajāmbūnadaprakhyam divyābharaṇabhūṣitam // 32
dhyāyedanalamadhyastham homakāle sadā budhaḥ /
pārṣadebhyo baliṁ dattvā homaśeṣam samāpayet // 33

32-33. Otherwise, one can perform the fire sacrifice in the fire lit according to 'Agnihotra' (i.e. the Vedic fire ritual in which the holy Mantras used are prescribed by the Vedas. In such a sacrifice, the Mantra given by the Guru is not used) by using offerings of cooked food and other requisite necessary offerings needed for such sacrifices.

While doing the Havan (fire sacrifice or worship of the fire God) in such a manner, a wise aspirant or seeker should always imagine (visualise) the supreme transcendental Lord being inherently and subtly present in the sacred fire in the glorious, brilliant, splendorous and radiant form of the Fire God, having a brilliant radiance similar to that of molten gold, duly adorned or decorated from top to toe in various divine and beautiful ornaments and decorations.

After that, he must make some offerings as sacrifice for my subordinates and followers, and thereby complete (wind up) the Havan (32-33).

[Note :- The word 'Vaali' appearing in the second line of verse no. 33 does not mean animal sacrifice. A word has many connotations and applications. Here it means a fraction of what is given as offering, presents, gift or oblation offered to the Fire God should be kept aside for the humble devotees of the Lord, and be given to them as charity or alms. So it means that the worshipper must not forget any devotee or follower of Sri Ram while remembering or worshipping the God. If he offers anything to Sri Ram, he must offer similar things to his followers or devotees. The Lord is not a selfish master or king who usurps everything that is offered to him for his own self while treating his dependants as third rate servants, slaves, serfs or vassals. He is very magnanimous, benevolent and munificent. He will accept anything only if it is also offered to his devotees, otherwise the Lord would not have it.]

ततो जपं प्रकुर्वीत ध्यायेन्मां यतवाक् स्मरन्। मुखवासं च ताम्बूलं दत्त्वा प्रीतिसमन्वितः॥ ३४॥
मदर्थं नृत्यगीतादि स्तुतिपाठादि कारयेत्। प्रणमेद्दण्डवद्भूमौ हृदये मां निधाय च॥ ३५॥

tato japaṃ prakurvīta dhyāyenmāṃ yataṃ smaran /
 mukhavāsaṃ ca tāmbūlaṃ dattvā prītisamanvitaḥ // 34
 madarthe nṛtyagītādi stutipāṭhādi kārayet /
 praṇameddaṇḍavadbhūmau hr̥daye māṃ nidhāya ca // 35

34-35. Thence, he (the worshipper) should observe silence, remember and meditate/concentrate upon me, and repeat my holy name. Then he should affectionately offer betel leaves and other mouth-fresheners to me (34).

Dances, singing of devotional songs and chanting of Stotras (hymns) should be organised in my honour. The worshipper should establish (enshrine) my attractive and enchanting image in his heart, and pay obeisance to me by prostrating himself like a stick on the ground before me (symbolising his humility and submission to the supreme Lord) (35).

शिरस्याधाय महत्तं प्रसादं भावनामयम्। पाणिभ्यां मम्पदे मूर्ध्नि गृहीत्वा भक्तिसंयुतः॥ ३६॥
 रक्ष मां घोरसंसारदित्युक्त्वा प्रणमेत्सुधीः। उद्भासयेद्यथापूर्वं प्रत्यग्ज्योतिषि संस्मरन्॥ ३७॥

śirasyādhāya maddattaṃ prasādaṃ bhāvanāmayam /
 pāṇibhyāṃ matpade mūrdhni gr̥hītṛvā bhaktisaṃyutaḥ // 36
 rakṣa mā ghorasaṃsārādityuktvā praṇametsudhīḥ /
 udvāsayediyathāpūrvam pratyagjyotiṣi saṃsmaran // 37

36-37. He should accept my ‘Prasad’ ((a) food and other offerings made to God, (b) anything received as a blessing or gift from God) with full devotion and respect as a token of my divine blessing upon him, and then keep it on his head (i.e. accept it with all humility, respect and honour, and feel obliged and privileged on having received it). He should keep my feet upon his head, as a token of total submission to me, with the greatest of reverence, devotion and humility (36).

He should bow before me, saying, ‘Oh Lord! Save me from this formidable world which is terrible and horrifying.’

Then a wise worshipper should think (imagine, conceptualise or visualise) that the super-conscious factor which was invoked and perceived as having been established in my idol/statue/image or portrait (see verse no. 23) has now entered (or has got transferred) in him (i.e. the worshipper) as a spark of eternal, divine, sublime and ethereal effulgence of fluorescent light. Then he should put down to rest my consecrated idol, statue, image or portrait (37).

[Note :- Verse no. 37 indicates that once the worship is completed and the worshipper goes back to his routine worldly chores, he should keep aside the idol or portrait either by closing the closet, or covering it by a sheet or curtain if he is offering his prayers in his household as part of his daily ritual, or immersing it in a river etc. if that worship is part of a greater religious festival or ceremony.

Another significant point is that the Lord, who had been conceived or visualised as having being present in that idol or portrait as a divine entity and super consciousness, has entered the heart of the worshipper at the time of conclusion of worship in the form of a divine spark leaving that image and entering the body of the worshipper (verse no.37). By this simple

device the Lord becomes one with the worshipper, he remains with him every second of the latter's existence in the form of the divine spark present in his bosom, whether he is waking or sleeping. The Lord is not separate from him, locked up in a Pooja/worship room or closet, as it were! With this pristine philosophy in context, the worshipper will always be assured of the Lord's presence with him, in thick and thin, and this would also help him to be on his guard and mind all his actions, because the Lord is literally policing all his actions and deeds!

The Lord has left that idol or portrait and has enshrined himself in the worshipper's inner self i.e. in the heart-like throne of his devotee (verse no.25). This is a very important verse from a general layman's and householder's point of view. It implies that the Lord is no where to seek but in the very heart of the seeker. If he can't see and visualise the Lord in his own heart and thinks that the idol situated in the worship room is the Lord, then he has not understood what the real meaning of worship is.]

एवमुक्तप्रकारेण पूजयेद्विधिवद्यदि। इहामुत्र च संसिद्धिं प्राप्नोति मदनुग्रहात्॥ ३८॥
मद्भक्तो यदि मामेवं पूजां चैव दिने दिने। करोति मम सारूप्यं प्राप्नोत्येव न संशयः॥ ३९॥

evamuktaparakāreṇa pūjayedvidhivadyadi /
ihāmūtra ca saṁsiddhiṁ prāpnoti madanugrahāt // 38
madbhakto yadi māmevaṁ pūjāṁ caiva dine dine /
karoti mama sārūpyaṁ prāpnotyeva na saṁśayaḥ // 39

38-39. Those persons who worship me according to the above laid down prescribed method, get fulfillment of all their desires both in this world while alive as well as in the after-world after their death (38).

If my devotee worships me in the above manner daily and as a matter of routine and habit, he becomes one with me—there is no doubt about it (39).

इदं रहस्यं परमं च पावनं मयैव साक्षात्कथितं सनातनम्। पठत्यजस्रं यदि वा शृणोति यः स सर्वपूजाफलभाङ् न संशयः॥ ४०॥

idaṁ rahasyaṁ paramaṁ ca pāvanaṁ
mayaiva sāṁskātkathitaṁ sanātanaṁ /
paṭhatyajasraṁ yadi vā śṛṇoti yaḥ
sa sarvapūjāphalabhāṇ na saṁśayaḥ // 40

40. This most holistic and esoteric system of worship and adoration that was hitherto undivulged, generally unknown and untold, is most holy, sublime, straight-forward, eternally truthful and the proper way of worshipping me. It is me (Sri Ram) who has described it to you myself. Those people who would even read or listen to it shall, verily, get the benefit of doing the entire Pooja or observing the full process of formal ritualistic worship' (40).

[Note :- As is evident by this verse, it is not even necessary to actually 'do' the elaborate exercise of ritualistic formal worship. Further, verse no. 19 emphasis that mere water is sufficient offering for the Lord, and verse no. 30 says that the Lord is hungry for nothing else except respect,

reverence, sincerity, dedication, faith, love and devotion. The implied meaning to these verses is that one can please the Lord in many ways, provided he has sincerity and devotion.]

एवं परात्मा श्रीरामः क्रियायोगमनुत्तमम्। पृष्टः प्राह स्वभक्ताय शेषांशाय महात्मने॥ ४१ ॥

evaṃ parātmā śrīrāmaḥ kriyāyogamanuttamam /
prṣṭaḥ prāha svabhaktāya śeṣāṃśāya mahātmāne // 41

41. In this manner, Sri Ram the Parmatma (supreme Soul) preached to the most exalted incarnation of Sheshnath (Laxman) about the most excellent process of worship called 'Kriya Yog' (i.e. physical, ritualistic worship) (41).

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Canto 2.6

Uttar Kand, Canto 5. This entire Canto comes under our subject of Ram Geeta as Lord Ram has elaborately preached Laxman about many esoteric principles of metaphysics, spiritualism and theology.

ततो जगन्मङ्गलमङ्गलात्मना विधाय रामायणकीर्तिमुत्तमाम्।
चचार पूर्वाचरितं रघूत्तमो राजर्षिवर्यैरभिसेवितं यथा॥ १ ॥

śrīmahādeva uvāca
tato jaganmaṅgalamaṅgalātmanā
vidhāya rāmāyaṇakīrtimuttamām /
cacāra pūrvācaritaṃ raghuttamo
rājarṣivaryairabhisevitaṃ yathā // 1

1. Lord Shiva said—'Oh Parvati! After that incident (of Sita's exile to Valmiki's hermitage), the most exalted of the Raghus (Sri Ram)—who had assumed his glorious and divine body (as a human) for the welfare and well being of the world and had acted most righteously according to established traditions and principles established by the scriptures, thereby establishing his stupendous glory in the form of his legendary story called Ramayan—followed the path established and exemplified by the exalted, noble and renunciate kings in the past (1).

सौमित्रिणा पृष्ट उदारबुद्धिना रामः कथाः प्राह पुरातनीः शुभाः।
राज्ञः प्रमत्तस्य नृगस्य शापतो द्विजस्य तिर्यक्त्वमथाह राघवः॥ २ ॥

saumitriṇā prṣṭa udārabuddhinā
rāmaḥ kathāḥ prāha purātaniḥ śubhāḥ /
rājñāḥ pramattasya nṛgasya śāpato

dvijasya tiryaktvamathāha rāghavaḥ // 2

2. When asked by the son of Sumitra (Laxman), who was of a broad outlook and had a munificent, generous and magnanimous nature, Sri Ram described to him magnificent ancient stories (from the Purans and other scriptures). In this context, Raghav (Sri Ram) told him the legendary story of king Nrig being cursed by a Brahmin and becoming a wriggling worm due to his stupidity and callousness resulting in his being negligent and indulging in careless deeds and behaviours (2).

कदाचिदेकान्त उपस्थितं प्रभुं रामं रमालालितपादपङ्कजम्।
सौमित्रिरासादितशुद्धभावनः प्रणम्य भक्त्या विनयान्वितोऽब्रवीत् ॥ ३ ॥

kadācidekānta upasthitaṁ prabhuṁ
rāmaṁ ramālālitapādapaṅkajam /
saumitrirāsāditaśuddhabhāvanaḥ
praṇamya bhaktyā vinayānvito'bravīt // 3

3. One day Lord Ram, whose lotus-like holy feet are served by goddess Laxmi herself, was sitting alone. At that time Laxman, who is of a pure and uncorrupt mind and intellect, went to him, bowed before him most reverentially and prayed to him most politely (3)—

त्वं शुद्धबोधोऽसि हि सर्वदेहिनामात्मास्यधीशोऽसि निराकृतिः स्वयम्।
प्रतीयसे ज्ञानदृशां महामते पादाब्जभृङ्गाहितसङ्गसङ्गिनाम् ॥ ४ ॥

tvam śuddhabodho'si hi sarvadehinā-
mātmāsyadhīśo'si nirākṛtiḥ svayam /
pratīyase jñānadṛśāṁ mahāmate
pābādjabhṛṅgāhitasan̄gasan̄ginām // 4

4. 'Oh the great and wise one (Sri Ram)! You are an embodiment and an image of pure, pristine wisdom, true knowledge and enlightenment; you are the Atma or the microcosmic soul of all the creatures who have a physical gross body; you are the Lord of all; and you are formless and without any attributes.

You are visible through the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment to those who admire, adore and love the company of your ardent devotees and followers who resemble a honey bee in their affection for your lotus-like holy feet. (4).

[Note--That is, only those who love the company of your devotees who are very devoted and close to you by the virtue of their sincere and deep devotion for you, get the opportunity to become aware of your reality and truth. Such devotees are compared to a bee because a bee is focused on the nectar present in the flower and it remains oblivious of the surrounding world when it is engaged in drinking nectar. Here in this simile, the bliss that is derived from having

devotion for you and by serving and remaining surrendered at your feet is like the nectar that the bees drink.

The company of your ardent devotees gives them an opportunity to remain in holy company where spiritual topics are discussed. The holy atmosphere is conducive to promoting auspiciousness, spiritualism and religiosity which in turn helps the aspirant seeking the Truth to experience it, perceive it and witness it, and he is thus inspired to pursue his goal in a righteous and auspicious manner, for in case he needs advice and guidance, he has your devotees as well as your own example to show him the path.]

अहं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि पदाम्बुजं प्रभो भवापवर्गं तव योगिभावितम् ।
यथाञ्जसाज्ञानमपारवारिधिं सुखं तरिष्यामि तथानुशाधि माम् ॥ ५ ॥

aham prapanno'smi padāmbujam prabho
bhavāpavargam tava yogibhāvitam /
yathāñjasājñānamapāravāridhiṃ
sukham tariṣyāmi tathānuśādhi mām // 5

5. Oh Lord! I take shelter and find refuge and succour in your lotus-like holy feet which are constantly meditated upon and remembered by Yogis (ascetics) and which are potent enough to liberate one from the shackles of this mundane, materialistic, delusory world. Please preach me (i.e. give me that pristine pure knowledge) so that I can easily, effortlessly get across this vast measureless ocean of ignorance' (5).

श्रुत्वाथ सौमित्रिवचोऽखिलं तदा प्राह प्रपन्नार्तिहरः प्रसन्नधीः ।
विज्ञानमज्ञानतमः प्रशान्तये श्रुतिप्रपन्नं क्षितिपालभूषणः ॥ ६ ॥

śrutvātha saumitrivaco'khilam tadā
prāha prapannārtiharaḥ prasannadhīḥ /
vijñānamajñānatamaḥpraśāntaye
śrutiprapannam kṣitipālabhūṣaṇaḥ // 6

6. Hearing all these words of the son of Sumitra (Laxman) and finding him very eager and sincere to find out (or hear) about the way to overcome the darkness of ignorance that has been worrying him, and achieve enlightenment through pure, pristine, divine and spiritual knowledge, Sri Ram—who is munificent, benevolent and magnanimous towards those who have sought his shelter and refuge with him, and who is like a jewel among the wise kings—said with a delighted mind and cheerful heart (6)—

आदौ स्ववर्णाश्रमवर्णिताः क्रियाः कृत्वा समासादितशुद्धमानसः ।
समाप्य तत्पूर्वमुपात्तसाधनः समाश्रयेत्सद्गुरुमात्मलब्धये ॥ ७ ॥

ādaū svavarṇāśramavarṇitāḥ kriyāḥ
kṛtvā samāsāditaśuddhamānasah /

samāpya tatpūrvamupāttasādhanaḥ
samāśrayetsadgurumātmalabdhaḥ // 7

7. (Sri Ram said—) 'To start with, one should be steadfast in honestly, diligently and righteously doing the sanctioned duties assigned to him and following the set norms determined for him by the scriptures in accordance with the respective Varnas and Ashrams to which one belongs in this life.

When, in due course of time (and sustained efforts), the mind-intellect apparatus (i.e. the emotions and thoughts) is purified (i.e. purged, catheterised) of all negative and evil tendencies and temperaments, all perversions and corruptions, then one should gradually detach and dissociate oneself from those worldly deeds.

During this period, he should endeavour to acquire the virtues of 'Sham and Dam', i.e. tranquility, calmness, quietness, and self-restraint as well as equanimity, pardon, tolerance, endurance, forbearance and fortitude respectively. This will help him to inculcate a pure and uncorrupt mind-intellect complex. Having thus prepared the preliminary ground, he should then approach a wise, erudite and enlightened teacher or a moral preceptor called a Guru for the acquisition of truthful knowledge about the reality and nature of the Atma which is the pure self or consciousness (i.e. seek self-realisation) (7).

[Note--(i) The society had been classified into 4 Varans, viz.— (a) Brahmins— they were the educated class whose main function was priesthood, teaching, moral guidance, study and interpretation of the scriptures etc.; (b) The Kshatriyas— they were the ruling class with the mandate to protect the society from predators relying on the strength of their arms; (c) The Vaishyas— they were supposed to do trading and other business related activities to take care of the financial and material well-being of the people; they were the mercantile section of the society; (d) the Shudras— that was a broad category encompassing all those who were of the service class. Their main brief was to serve the other three classes so that they are spared the tedious chores related to the day-to-day life and instead concentrate on their main designated functions as briefed above.

(ii) The four Ashrams were the periods in which the life of an individual was divided into, viz.— (a) Brahmachari— the celibate period devoted to study and inculcating self-restraint. It was the 1st quarter of life; (b) Grihastha— the married period of life dealing with household activities and responsibilities, especially with procreation. This was the 2nd quarter; (c) Vaanprastha— it was expected that a householder, after living up to his expectations, would eventually hand over the mantle to his kith and kin, especially his offspring, and prepare himself to leave the humdrum world of material objects and responsibilities and go to the forest in preparation for the final exit from this world. This is the 3rd phase of life; (d) Sanyas— means complete renunciation and disassociation from worldly ties. During these phase, actual dwelling in secluded forest was expected from an aspirant. The time was to be spent in doing Tapa (austerities and penances) and Yoga (meditating and contemplating), and in general repenting and atoning for the sins that were done during the earlier phases of life. This phase of life required serenity, placidity and total detachment from the world left behind by the seeker/aspirant for obtaining total bliss and tranquility of the soul. This marked the 4th phase prior to death.

The basic idea expressed in this verse is that a person should do his worldly duties in a righteous manner according to the guidelines set by the scriptures. This automatically implies that the deeds are to be done not only righteously but also without allowing oneself being attached to them and their results; not being indulgent in them and remaining instead dispassionate towards

them from the very beginning. The deeds should be regarded as an offering to the sacrificial fire and one should think that the world is not the real thing that it appears to be.

This way of thinking and outlook would help a person prepare for inculcating noble virtues as Sham and Dam as described above. These prepare the ground for his spiritual progress.]

क्रिया शरीरोद्भवहेतुरादृता प्रियाप्रियौ तौ भवतः सुराणिः।
धर्मेतरौ तत्र पुनः शरीरकं पुनः क्रिया चक्रवदीर्यते भवः॥ ८॥

kriyā śārīrodbhavaheturādr̥tā
priyāpriyau tau bhavataḥ surāṇiḥ /
dharmetarau tatra punaḥ śārīrakam
punaḥ kriyā cakravadyate bhavaḥ // 8

8. [In this verse, it is described how and why a creature continues to fall in, or is repeatedly tied to the endless cycle of birth and death—]

Deeds and actions done by a person are an accepted means to determine the course that the individual follows at the end of his worldly life. This is applicable to that person who admires his body and falsely thinks that the gross body is his true personae (and not the causal body harbouring the pure self which is the pure consciousness called Atma and the person's true identity). Since the body does various deeds which may be good or bad, righteous or unrighteous, the person has to suffer their consequences because he had identified himself with the body that had done the deed. The person cannot claim indemnity from the results of the deeds. This results in his obtaining a body or form as a reward or punishment which is consonant with the good or bad deeds done during the life time of the person. The body thus acquired (depending upon the nature, quality, quantum and category of various deeds and actions) indulges in a new/fresh cycle of deeds and actions. This is how this world goes on and on like a wheel (8).

अज्ञानमेवास्य हि मूलकारणं तद्धानमेवात्र विधौ विधीयते।
विद्यैव तन्नाशविधौ पटीयसी न कर्म तज्जं सविरोधमीरितम्॥ ९॥

ajñānamevāśya hi mūlakāraṇam
taddhānamevātra vidhau vidhīyate /
vidyaiva tannāśavidhau paṭīyasī /
na karma tajjam savirodhamīritam // 9

9. The root cause of treating the world as having an existence and consequence is the presence of ignorance and lack of true knowledge¹ of what is the actual reality. This ignorance can be eliminated with the help of and by having firm faith, conviction and belief in the divine words of advice and truth as proclaimed by the scriptures. The elimination of the darkness of ignorance (called Agyan) by the light of knowledge and wisdom (called Gyan) is said to be the only means to obtain liberation and deliverance from the fetters that is symbolized by this world.

Only Gyan (truthful and correct wisdom, knowledge, erudition, enlightenment, awareness and realisation) is potentially able to destroy (overcome, eliminate) Agyan (ignorance and all things that are the opposite of Gyan), not Karma (the deeds or actions done by a creature)², simply because the latter (deeds/actions) have their origin in ignorance and they cannot oppose (or be inimical to or stand against) their creator Agyan that has generated them. (9).

[Note—¹What is this ignorance and what is the knowledge the lack of which causes so many problems for the creature? The two fundamental errors of conceptions—viz. one, the body is the identity of the creature, or that one's body is one's true form and identity and that one is known and recognised by one's body, and second, the notion of one being the doer of deeds, though the deeds are being done by the body and not the Atma. The first misconception is the root cause of all other misconceptions—for the true self or identity of a creature is not its body but the Atma or soul. The body is perishable and gross and subject to all sorts of afflictions, whereas the Atma is pure, eternal, sublime, ethereal, divine and consciousness. If this fact is realised, then the train of falsehoods that follow in the wake of the first misconception also get automatically derailed, because, to begin with, the deeds are done by the gross external body and not the sublime and subtle Atma which resides in the causal body of a creature. When the Atma does not do any deed then the very premise on which it is subjected to sufferance is eliminated. Hence, there is no question of it either enjoying or suffering from good or bad deeds done by the body.

Once a fallacious conception is allowed to get a stranglehold on the creature, it is impossible to free oneself from its clutches unless Gyan or truthful awareness is used as a stick and enables one to chase the bull representing ignorance out of his house and prevent more damage to his household representing his inner self, which in this case is his mind and intellect complex regulating his emotions and thoughts as well as his intellectual discriminatory faculties. The creature is the Atma in this example.

²Verse no. 8 has already emphasised that it is out of ignorance that a creature thinks that what the body does is being done by him. The factual position is something different, as the Atma is the creature's true identity and not the body. So the very notion of 'doing deeds' or that 'I am doing something' is due to ignorance of the truth. Therefore deeds cannot help one to get rid of ignorance. It is only possible by acquisition of the correct knowledge that would tell the creature what is the fact and help him to wiser up to the reality. Since Karma (deeds) has Agyan as its parent, it cannot go against it.]

नाज्ञानहानिर्न च रागसंक्षयो भवेत्ततः कर्म सदोषमुद्भवेत्।
ततः पुनः संसृतिरप्यवारिता तस्माद्बुधो ज्ञानविचारवान्भवेत् ॥ १० ॥

nājñānahānirna ca rāgasamkṣayo
bhavettataḥ karma sadoṣamudbhavet /
tataḥ punaḥ saṁsṛtirapyavāritā
tasmādbudho jñānavicāravānbhavet // 10

10. One cannot hope to destroy either ignorance or overcome attachments to this world, the sense of belonging to it, having infatuations, attractions and yearnings etc. for it by doing anything with a motive and having a desire or expectation of a reward, either good or bad. On the contrary, such kinds of actions only result in creation of newer desires and yearnings as well as the accompanying actions to fulfill those desires and yearnings. As a

consequence, the vicious cycle continues endlessly. This naturally results in rebirth in this world (see verse no. 8). Therefore, those who are clever and wise, should spend their time in contemplation and self study in order to overcome ignorance and lack of truthful knowledge which is the mother of all fetters tying the soul to this mundane, entangling and artificial world (10).

[Note :- The creature takes repeated birth in this world because all the desires cannot be fulfilled in one life alone, and the unfulfilled desires pushes the soul into another body to enable it to accomplish those unfulfilled and incomplete tasks in a new life. Besides this, the deeds done during the present life leaves a certain train of consequences in their wake as every action has a commensurate reaction. Like the theory that energy cannot perish but only changes shape, these consequences force the creature to change his form and bear the consequences of his own deeds. Since the creature had all along been claiming that its body is its own and has been identifying itself with the body, it cannot deny that it has not done a particular deed and is not responsible for its results.

These two factors—unfulfilled desires and consequences of deeds done—have the combined effect on the destiny of the creature who has erroneously thought that it is the one with a particular body that has done a particular deed, and therefore it has got the right to enjoy its fruits.

On the contrary, if the creature has the benefit of Gyan, it would realise that the body is not its true identity but it is the Atma, and the latter is pure conscious, immaculate, unattached to anything, and is merely a witness and not a doer of deeds, the creature would not be accused of either doing the deeds and therefore is not forced to bear its consequences.

There is another chapter in which Lord Ram has preached Laxman on these fundamental metaphysical questions in Aranya Kand, canto 4, verse nos. 16-55. To be precise, verse no. 36-45 describes what constitutes Gyan.]

ननु क्रिया वेदमुखेन चोदिता तथैव विद्या पुरुषार्थसाधनम् ।
कर्तव्यता प्राणभृतः प्रचोदिता विद्यासहायत्वमुपैति सा पुनः ॥ ११ ॥

nanu kriyā vedamukhena coditā
tathaiva vidyā puruṣārthasāadhanam /
kartavyatā prāṇabhṛtaḥ pracoditā
vidyāsahāyatvamupaiti sā punaḥ // 11

11. [Verse no.11-13 describe how people with erroneous conceptions and fallacious thinking misinterpret the real meaning of what the scriptures say and present arguments quoting these very scriptures to bolster their ill-conceived ideas to create a lot of confusion. It must be remembered that the same thing can be interpreted in more than one way, but the trick is to interpret it correctly.]

Some skeptics and doubting Thomas's argument is that doing deeds (i.e. not sitting idle, or running away from the world and duties allotted to a creature by virtue of his taking birth and being alive) is as much sanctioned (ratified, supported and prescribed) by the Vedas as is the acquisition of Gyan (true knowledge, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and self realisation). That is, according to them, both 'deed' and 'knowledge' is one thing and they both are spiritually enlightening.

They argue that spiritual efforts diligently made by a person provide him with the reward of him being able to access or acquire knowledge of what is the reality and truth, which in its wake gives him liberation and deliverance from the bondages of this artificial, entrapping and troubling world. Similarly, deeds also require efforts on the part of the person to be successful and bear fruits for him. Both require sincere effort, industry, diligence, energy and labour.

Besides this, the Vedas emphasise and prescribe that all the creatures are expected to act or do deeds according to their destiny (i.e. their Varans and Ashrams; see verse no.7) (for not doing anything and sitting idle is in it self considered a negative trait and chided by the scriptures—see verse no.12 below).

Hence, deeds and actions involving efforts and diligence become a co-partner in one's endeavour of acquiring truthful knowledge, erudition and enlightenment (11).

कर्माकृतौ दोषमपि श्रुतिर्जगौ तस्मात्सदा कार्यमिदं मुमुक्षुणा।
ननु स्वतन्त्रा ध्रुवकार्यकारिणी विद्या न किञ्चिन्मनसाप्यपेक्षते॥ १२॥
न सत्यकार्योऽपि हि यद्वदध्वरः प्रकांक्षतेऽन्यानपि कारकादिकान्।
तथैव विद्या विधितः प्रकाशितैर्विशिष्यते कर्मभिरेव मुक्तये॥ १३॥

karmākṛtau doṣamapi śrutirjagau
tasmātsadā kāryamidaṁ mumukṣuṇā /
nanu svatantrā dhruvakāryakāriṇī
vidyā na kiñcinmanasāpyapekṣate // 12
na satyakāryo'pi hi yadvadadhvaraḥ
prakāṅkṣate'nyānapi kārakādikān /
tathaiva vidyā vidhitaḥ prakāśitai-
rviśiṣyate karmabhireva muktaye // 13

12-13. The Vedas find fault in remaining idle, indolent and lethargic as well as in frittering away time and life carelessly and uselessly. So the seekers of emancipation and salvation (Moksha) should continue to do them (i.e. they must not waste their time in indolence and inertia, and continue to do whatever deeds they are supposed to do according to their destiny).

If anyone says or claims that Gyan (enlightenment, self realisation, true knowledge and wisdom) is self sustained and independent of all and can produce its beneficial effects with certainty, and that it does not need any help from any quarter, then it is wrong to say so (12).

For example, doing religious sacrifices (e.g. fire sacrifice) entails doing a number of accompanying chores attendant and necessary to successfully complete it¹.

Similarly, Gyan can be an instrument (medium) of emancipation and salvation when it is accompanied by righteous, auspicious, noble and sanctioned actions and deeds which are compatible with the aim of salvation and liberation from the web of this mundane, entangling world, and conducive to this aim². (13).

[Note--¹That is, though the sacrifice itself is a most righteous, holy and Veda-sanctioned conception and a righteous mean for a creature's spiritual enhancement and its liberation and

deliverance from this entrapping world, but it cannot be done without proper preparation and accompanying hassles such as giving charities and alms, honouring Gods and Brahmins, keeping strict vows such as fasting, celibacy, restraint of the sense organs, leading austere life etc. It also involves elaborate rituals requiring a lot of effort and diligence on the part of the aspirant. In short, a lot of effort is involved in this mean of spiritual progress.

²That is, if a person claims to be really enlightened and wise, then there is no need for him to shun doing deeds and taking necessary actions as deemed prudent by circumstances. This is because it is deemed that such a wise person would not allow himself to be emotionally and mentally involved in those deeds that the body does as needed by destiny for it to do. Non-involvement in deeds is the key here; and the natural corollary is non-expectation of any reward. This creates detachment and indifference towards both the deeds as well as the reward, and subsequently the creature remains unruffled and peaceful and unconcerned about what happens by doing anything and what does not. This peace, tranquility and blissfulness is a characteristic feature of a person who has obtained Gyan, and it also marks liberation from the troubles and tribulations that are hallmarks of this mundane and deluding world that sucks an ignorant person in its vortex of miseries and pain.

‘Moksha’ is not dependent so much on deeds as it is on remaining detached from these deeds and their results, which is a difficult proposition. This is not possible unless one realises that one’s true self is the Atma and not the body. This is where people with faulty conception stumble. They forget that the very notion that ‘I am doing deeds’ is directly related to the creature having awareness of one’s body, because deeds are done by the body. If one is unaware of the body, then there is no question of even being aware of whether the deed is done or not. Incidentally, this unawareness of the existence of the body while doing deeds is what is known as ‘Samadhi’ wherein the aspirant goes about his normal routing work without being aware of what is happening. The following verse no.14 further elaborates on this fact.]

केचिद्वदन्तीति वितर्कवादिनस्तदप्यसद्दृष्टविरोधकारणात् ।
देहाभिमानादभिवर्धते क्रिया विद्या गताहङ्कृतितः प्रसिद्ध्यति ॥ १४ ॥

kecidvadantīti vitarkavādina-
stadapyasaddrṣṭavirodhakāraṇāt /
dehābhimānādabhivardhate kriyā
vidyā gatāhaṅkṛtitaḥ prasiddhyati // 14

14. Those skeptics, doubting Thomases and heretics who, under delusions and erroneous conceptions, set up false reasoning that is illogical, say or claim it to be so (as in verse nos. 11-13), are inherently at fault because their claim is evidently self contradictory.

This is because deeds and actions are done due to the false notion of ego, pride and arrogance that a creature has about his body. These deeds and actions are associated with the erroneous belief that the body that does the deed is one’s ‘self’. A creature does anything because he is proud or confident that his body will be able to accomplish a particular task. Once the task is finished, it feels satisfied and proud that ‘it is me who has done such and such thing and therefore am entitled to enjoy its reward’.

On the contrary, Gyan entails crushing of the negative element of Ahankar (pride, ego, vanity and their attendant arrogance and haughtiness) which arise out of Agyan (ignorance), which means that the creature does not know the true nature of the pure self, which is the pure conscious Atma and not the gross body, and remains under the false

impression that ‘he is a doer of deeds’ which the body is actually doing under the mandate of destiny (14).

[Note—Verse no.7 above endorses this view that in the beginning one should do one’s sanctioned duties according to sanctioned methods, and use this opportunity of service to inculcate wisdom and erudition by observing the truth about the world as expounded by the scriptures. He carefully and closely sees the falseness of this world and the futility of pursuing its mirage-like pleasures and comforts which are nevertheless perishable and artificial. This first-hand witnessing inculcates renunciation and detachment in him, and even without any prodding he would tend to veer away from all those things that are impermanent and artificial, are meant only to trap instead of liberate. This does not mean running away from duties and doing deeds, but doing them with dispassion and neutrality, with equanimity and fortitude.]

विशुद्धविज्ञानविरोचनाञ्चिता विद्यात्मवृत्तिश्चरमेति भण्यते ।
उदेति कर्माखिलकारकादिभिर्निहन्ति विद्याखिलकारकादिकम् ॥ १५ ॥

viśuddhavijñānavirocanāñcitā
vidyātmavṛttiścarameti bhaṇyate /
udeti karmākhilakāṛakādibhi-
rnihanti vidyākhilakāṛakādikam // 15

15. The fundamental and truthful nature of the ‘true and pure self’ as supreme, truthful, eternal and pure consciousness is brought to the fore under the light of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom that comes by constant and persistent study of the scriptures, such as the Vedas and Upanishads, contemplation upon their great tenets, pondering deeply on their import and practicing of their edicts and paths shown by them. The pure conscious self begins to glow and emanate a radiance that is experienced and witnessed by the seeker. That eclectic, wholesome and divine knowledge that ensures that this realisation is brought about is known as Vidya. [It is also known as Atma-Vidya because it pertains to realisation of Atma.]

In addition to this, all the deeds are done by a so-called ‘doer’, whereas true knowledge of the truth and self realisation entails destruction of the notion of being a ‘doer’ of anything (15).

[Note :- When the creature realises its true nature and identity as being the Atma which is pure consciousness and is truthful, eternal, dispassionate and neutral, and which is distinct from the gross physical body which actually does the physical exercise of the deed, it ceases to do anything in the sense that it—as the Atma—is not involved in the deeds done by the body which is non-Atma. Therefore, the creature is dispassionate in doing whatever is to be done as ordained by destiny or its past deeds, and is not bothered about its outcome or rewards, whether good or bad. Such a creature is self-realised and enlightened in as far as his deeds are concerned. This state is compared to the situation in which, under delusions, the creature identifies itself with the body and thinks itself to be the ‘doer’ of the various deeds and its incumbent emotions and consequences. The word ‘doer’ links the soul to the external body and other factors that are not at all linked to its pure form. When the soul/Atma de-links itself from these extraneous factors, it does not call itself the ‘doer’, but merely becomes a ‘witness’ to whatever is happening. The difference between the words ‘doer’ and ‘witness’ is very obvious and does not require much

explanation. While the former actively involves in actions, the latter just watches passively, dispassionately. See also note to verse nos. 28-34 below.]

तस्मात्त्यजेत्कार्यमशेषतः सुधीर्विद्याविरोधान्न समुच्चयो भवेत्।
आत्मानुसन्धानपरायणः सदा निवृत्तसर्वेन्द्रियवृत्तिगोचरः ॥ १६ ॥

tasmātyajetkāryamaśeṣataḥ sudhī-
rvidyāvirodhānna samuccayo bhavet /
ātmānusandhānaparāyaṇaḥ sadā
nivr̥ttasarvendriyavr̥ttigocaraḥ // 16

16. That is why a wise and clever seeker should distance himself or become dispassionate or detached towards all the objects of the senses pertaining to this material world which gratify the various sense organs of the body, and instead divert one's energy and efforts industriously towards self-realisation and enlightenment, towards researching about the truth of the self.

Towards this end, he should abandon involvement in deeds because these deeds create distraction and disturbance in his concentration and steadfastness of purpose; they act as a hindrance and create obstacles in the path.

Karma (deed and action) are opposed to Vidya (truthful enlightenment about the Atma) and therefore they are not compatible with each other. They are not complimentary to each other (16).

यावच्छरीरादिषु माययात्मधीस्तावद्विधेयो विधिवादकर्मणाम्।
नेतीति वाक्यैरखिलं निषिध्य तज्ज्ञात्वा परात्मानमथ त्यजेत्क्रियाः ॥ १७ ॥

yāvaccharīrādiṣu māyayātmadhī-
stāvadvidheyo vidhivādakarmaṇām /
netīti vākyairakhilaṁ niṣidhya
tajjñātvā parātmānamatha tyajetkriyāḥ // 17

17. As long as a person is attached to his body and objects pertaining to (relevant, concerning) it (i.e. till the time he identifies himself with the gross, physical body and its surrounding materialistic world) due to the evil, misleading, diversionary effects and influences of Maya (delusions and deceptions), it is prescribed for him that he performs the various religious rituals and observes sacraments as detailed by the scriptures. [These rituals are various sacrifices, duties, observances and sacraments which only help him to rinse himself from the dirt constantly clinging to him due to his own stupidity and erroneous beliefs and illusions. They are like crutches. They are not cures but only stop-gap arrangements or aids in his spiritual pursuits.]

A wise person is one who deeply ponders and contemplates upon the great conclusions of the Vedas, such as 'Neti-Neti' (i.e. the truth is neither this nor that), and become certain that none of these material objects of the external world are for real and truthful; they are perishable and artificial. The only entity that is real and truthful is the

eternal and conscious Atma. Besides the Atma the rest is ‘non-Atma’, i.e. they are not eternal and not conscious. One should realise one’s own true supreme and sublime essential form as he Atma which is an image of the transcendental Parmatma who is the cosmic Soul or Atma of the entire creation.

This realisation would help him to naturally abandon Karma or getting involved in doing deeds (again because he realises that the deeds are being done by the body and not the Atma and that his own self is the Atma and not the body. Therefore, there is no question of him doing any thing because the Atma is not doing anything, but remains only a witness and spectator to all that is happening) (17).

यदा परात्मात्मविभेदभेदकं विज्ञानमात्मन्यवभाति भास्वरम् ।
तदैव माया प्रविलीयतेऽञ्जसा सकारका कारणमात्मसंसृतेः ॥ १८ ॥

yadā parātmātmavibhedabhedakam
vijñānamātmanyavabhāti bhāsvaram /
tadaiva māyā praviliyate’ñjasā
sakārakā kāraṇamātmasaṁsṛte // 18

18. At the fortunate instant when the brilliant light of enlightenment and self realisation—that there is no duality or distinction between the transcendental, supreme, macrocosmic Soul of the entire creation, called Parmatma, and the creature's own microcosmic soul called the conscious self or Atma—shines inside the heart of the creature, Maya (ignorance induced delusions) and its accompanying chain of falsehoods that makes the creature get involved in various deeds, together with their incumbent consequences, become extinct. This extinction and blowing away or dissolution of Maya removes the very cause of the creature being shackled to, or getting pilloried to the entrapping world, resulting in the creature taking a rebirth (18).

श्रुतिप्रमाणाभिविनाशिता च सा कथं भविष्यत्यपि कार्यकारिणी ।
विज्ञानमात्रादमलाद्वितीयतस्तस्मादविद्या न पुनर्भविष्यति ॥ १९ ॥

śrutipramāṇābhivināśitā ca sā
katham bhaviṣyatyapi kāryakāriṇī /
vijñānamātrādamalādvitīya-
tastasmādaavidyā na punarbhaviṣyati // 19

19. If it (Maya) is destroyed, eliminated or removed using the method shown by the Vedas (as described in brief in the preceding verses and all earlier gospels that deal with Maya), how can it dare to carry out its nefarious activities again? This is because of the fact that the essential or elementary transcendental Truth is one and irrefutably only one, it is an embodiment of Gyan (wisdom, truthful knowledge and enlightenment), it is pure, pristine, uncorrupt and unique, having no parallel of its kind. Hence, when one becomes aware of this essential ‘truth’ (as in verse nos. 7-18), then there is no scope left for ignorance or Agyan to rise (or raise its head) again (19).

यदि स्म नष्टा न पुनः प्रसूयते कर्ताहमस्येति मतिः कथं भवेत्।
तस्मात्स्वतन्त्रा न किमप्यपेक्षते विद्या विमोक्षाय विभाति केवला॥ २०॥

yadi sma naṣṭā na punaḥ prasūyate
kartāhamasyeti matiḥ katham bhavet /
tasmātsvatantrā na kimapyapekṣate
vidyā vimokṣāya vibhāti kevalā // 20

20. When ignorance (i.e. Avidya) and its accompanying illusions, delusions and misconceptions (i.e. Maya) can't be produced again after being made extinct once (as described in verse nos. 15-19), then how can an enlightened, sagacious, erudite, self realised and wise person ever feel or say that 'I am the doer of such and such deed'? That is the reason why Gyan is independent and self-sustained, and it has the potential to independently, out of its own accord, provide liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the creature without depending on any other means such as deeds done, actions taken or other physical activities of the body, for instance religious activities and other such things (20).

[Note :- This verse should be read in conjunction with verse no. 17 to bring out the full meaning. Once erudition enlightens a creature about the falsehood of the objects of this materialistic world, it never gets enticed by them; it can never be tricked into believing that the world is true. This wisdom is permanent because it has been born out of wisdom and deep analysis of the principles pronounced by the scriptures. It is not hearsay but actually experienced by the seeker patiently and over a period of time when he was actively doing his duties in this world as prescribed in verse no.7 above. This leads to detachment and disillusionment from the world. It is obvious that once being detached from the deeds, the creature breaks the vicious cycle consisting of 'deeds, their results, unfulfilled desires, new birth which is a consequence of these, newer deeds and desires', and so and so forth as described in verse nos. 8-10. Please also refer to verse no. 34 and 45-47 in this context.]

सा तैत्तिरीयश्रुतिराह सादरं न्यासं प्रशस्ताखिलकर्मणां स्फुटम्।
एतावदित्याह च वाजिनां श्रुतिर्ज्ञानं विमोक्षाय न कर्म साधनम्॥ २१॥

sā taittirīyaśrutirāha sādaram
nyāsam praśastākhilakarmanām sphuṭam /
etāvadityāha ca vājinaṁ śruti-
rjñānam vimokṣāya na karma sādhanam // 21

21. This observation finds its unequivocal support and ratification in the following two branches of the Vedas—(a) The Taittiriya branch¹ expressly asserts politely as a dictum that it is best to forsake all deeds and external engagements. (b) Similarly, 'Etawat'² etc. doctrines contained in the Vajsaney branch of the Vedas also proclaim that Gyan is the way to attain emancipation and salvation, and not deeds, various worldly activities and numerous engagements in any other rituals (21).

[Note:- (a)¹“Na karmanaa na prajayaa dhanena tyaagenaik amritattwanushaeha”: Taiteria Aranayak 10/10 is the verdict of Taiteriya Brahmin.

(b)² “Eetaavadare khalvamri-tattvam”: Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4/5/15 is the verdict of Etawat referred above. They mean in brief as follows—(a) The essence of the nectar cannot be found by a man without forsaking deeds, worldly activities and acquisition of wealth. (b) That it is the only means of finding the essence of the nectar.]

विद्यासमत्वेन तु दर्शितस्त्वया क्रतुर्न दृष्टान्त उदाहृतः समः।
फलैः पृथक्त्वाद्ब्रह्मकारकैः क्रतुः संसाध्यते ज्ञानमतो विपर्ययम्॥ २२॥

vidyāsamatvena tu darśitastvayā
kraturna dr̥ṣṭānta udāhṛtaḥ samaḥ /
phalaiḥ pṛthaktvādbahukāraikaiḥ kratuḥ
saṁsādhyaṭe jñānamato viparyayam // 22

22. You (i.e. Laxman) have cited various religious rituals and sacrifices as being either complimentary or equivalent to Gyan (see verse nos. 11-13), but this conclusion or citation is a fallacy. It is because both have different results (or fruits/rewards). Besides this, a religious sacrifice entails the services of various ‘doers’ (helpers and subordinates besides the chief patron and priests), while Gyan, as opposed to it, involves none (because it entails contemplation and meditation which rule out external interferences which act as impediments and obstacles in spiritual pursuit) (22).

[Note:- In brief it means that acquisition of Gyan is of paramount importance and superior to religious rituals and sacrifices. It is the best path to attain emancipation and salvation of the soul as opposed to other means. Further, since Gyan requires immense concentration and self study, it requires serenity, tranquility and placidity of mind and environment. It involves a journey inwards rather than outwards in this noisy world which vexes the spirit of the aspirant instead of helping him in his spiritual pursuits. Compared to Gyan, other religious pursuits entail a lot of worldly activities.]

सप्रत्यवायो ह्यहमित्यनात्मधीरज्ञप्रसिद्धा न तु तत्त्वदर्शिनः।
तस्माद् बुधैस्त्याज्यमविक्रियात्मभिर्विधानतः कर्म विधिप्रकाशितम्॥ २३॥

apratyavāyo hyahamityanātmadhī-
rajñāprasiddhā na tu tattvadarśinaḥ /
tasmādbudhaistyājyamavikriyātmabhi-
vidhānataḥ karma vidhiprakāśitam // 23

23. 'I shall be guilty of misconduct and violation of established traditions and shall have to repent for it (by being indifferent towards deeds, by abandoning doing of deeds, as that would make me seem to be apparently lethargic, apathetic, un-industrious, indolent and

inactive besides being ignorant of what the scriptures prescribe)'—such a stupid and erroneous thought can occur to ignorant and foolish people but not to the wise and enlightened ones who are aware of the truth and essential reality.

That is why the wise and sagacious person who has a pure, uncorrupt and blemish-free mind and intellect apparatus should endeavour to abandon doing even expected deeds (i.e. those deeds that have their sanction by the scriptures and are to be done if one takes a birth; the ordained deeds or the deeds determined by the destiny of the creatures). But this abandonment must not be reckless and impulsive, and as an excuse for being indolent and lazy, being careless and callous, but must be done systematically and diligently, in a well thought out way and in accordance with established procedure for doing it (23).

श्रद्धान्वितस्तत्त्वमसीति वाक्यतो गुरोः प्रसादादपि शुद्धमानसः।
विज्ञाय चैकात्म्यमथात्मजीवयोः सुखी भवेन्मेरुरिवाप्रकम्पनः॥ २४॥

śraddhānvitastattvamasīti vākyato
guroḥ prasādādapi śuddhamānasah /
vijñāya caikātmayamathātmajīvayoḥ
sukhī bhavenmerurivāprakampanah // 24

24. Having cleansed his mind-intellect complex of all the corrupting influences, the seeker/aspirant should seek the advice and blessing of a wise teacher, and as a reward or fruit of such seeking and blessing of the teacher, he should realise the absolute truth of the great saying (proclamation of the Vedas) 'TATWAMASI' with the greatest of reverence, honour, faith, conviction and devotion. The great tenet of the Vedas emphasises the oneness (non-duality) between the Parmatma (i.e. the supreme, macrocosmic, all-pervading, omniscient transcendental Soul) and the microcosmic counterpart of it in the creature called the Atma which is pure consciousness. By this self realisation, he would become sublime, tranquil, blissful, happy, contented, stable, un-wavering and unfaltering like the Sumeru mountain (24).

आदौ पदार्थावगतिर्हि कारणं वाक्यार्थविज्ञानविधौ विधानतः।
तत्त्वम्पदार्थौ परमात्मजीवकावसीति चैकात्म्यमथानयोर्भवेत्॥ २५॥

ādaupadārthāvagatirhi kāraṇam
vākyārthavijñānavidhau vidhānataḥ /
tattvampadārthau paramātmajīvakā-
vasīti caikātmayamathānayorbhavet // 25

25. It is a rule that to understand the meaning of a sentence or phrase, one must understand the meaning of each individual word or syllables in it. Therefore, this great maxim (truth) of the Vedas TATWAMASI (see verse no. 24) which is an established axiom (i.e. self evident truth) consists of two syllables, viz. 'Tat' and 'twam' which refer to the 'Parmatma or the 'supreme macrocosmic transcendental Soul' and the 'Atma or the

microcosmic soul of the creatures’ respectively, while the third syllable ‘ASI’ links the two as being equivalent to each other or synonymous with each other; it establishes uniformity between them (25).

[Note :- In simple language, verse nos. 24-25 mean that the Parmatma and the Atma are one and the same. See footnote to verse no. 27.]

प्रत्यक्परोक्षादि विरोधमात्मनोर्विहाय सङ्गृह्य तयोश्चिदात्मताम्।
संशोधितां लक्षणया च लक्षितां ज्ञात्वा स्वमात्मानमथाद्वयो भवेत्॥ २६॥

pratyakparokṣādivirodhamātmano-
rvihāya saṅgrhya tayościdātmatām /
saṁśodhitāṁ lakṣaṇayā ca lakṣitāṁ
jñātvā svamātmānamathādvayo bhavet // 26

26. Out of these two (Parmatma and the Atma), the Atma of the creature is evident and witnessed by all (as the living creature visible to all), whereas Parmatma is beyond the comprehension of a creature and is imperceptible by even the mind and intellect (because he is invisible and in spite of being all pervading, he cannot be easily grasped and observed by any of the organs of a creature, such as the organs of perception and organs of comprehension).

One should leave aside the doubt and confusion arising out of apparent contradictions between the Atma and the Parmatma (that on the one hand both the Atma and Parmatma are one, and on the other hand they appear to be so different that there seems no comparison between them).

One should not be perplexed or confounded by the apparent contradiction between the literal meaning of the word ‘TATWAMASI’, but understand and accept the spirit or essence behind it which is self evident and clearly perceived in the form of the intrinsic characteristics, salient features and irrefutable signs that are indications of their uniformity. These signs/indications/characteristics clearly, undoubtedly and unambiguously establish that ‘pure consciousness’ is the uniform factor in both of them, the Parmatma as well as the Atma. This conclusion should be firmly established within the creature's mind and intellect that both the entities are synonymous with each other and they are the same (26).

एकात्मकत्वाज्जहती न सम्भवेत्तथजहल्लक्षणात् विरोधतः।
सोऽयम्पदार्थाविव भागलक्षणा युज्येत तत्त्वम्पदयोरदोषतः॥ २७॥

ekātmakatvājjahatī na sambhave-
ttathājahallakṣaṇatā virodhataḥ /
so’yampadārthāviva bhāgalakṣaṇā
yujyeta tattvampadayoradoṣataḥ // 27

27. Since the two syllables 'TAT' and 'TWAM' (refer verse no. 25) stand for the same essential truth which is one and the same (i.e. they are synonymous with one another), there cannot be a separate third meaning, connotation or interpretation of the word TATWAMASI.

At the same time, since these two syllables stand for two apparently different, distinct entities (as in verse no. 26), the word cannot describe the same entity; it cannot establish that they are one and the same immutable entity; it cannot indicate their unity, sameness or non-duality.

That is why, like the meaning of the axiom 'SOYAM' which literally means 'This is He' or 'This is It', the two earlier syllables (Tat and Twam) can have similarity or singularity in meaning by finding a characteristic common to both—such as the factor of 'pure consciousness' which is applicable to both the Parmatma (represented by the letters Tat) and the creature's Atma/soul (represented by the letters Twam). This definition has no errors or faults in it (27).

[Note :- (A) There are three types of meanings or interpretations of a word—(i) Jahati Laxana in which the literal meaning of the word is not taken into account and a different connotation is attached to it; (ii) Ajahal Laxana in which the word meaning is considered, but additional meanings and interpretations are added to it to give the word a wider ramification; (iii) Bhag Laxana in which a part is dropped and a part of the literal meaning is retained to arrive at a third interpretation of the word.

(B) There are the so-called four Mahavakyas or the great sayings, declarations, commandments or axioms and maxims of the Vedas as follows—(i) 'Brahm Is Consciousness' (Pragnanam Brahm) appears in Aitreyia Upanishad of the Rig Veda. It means that Atma/consciousness, which gives life to the material layers consisting of the five sheaths of the creature is the same as the Supreme Reality/Truth behind the entire universe/creation called by the name of Brahm; (ii) 'That Thou Art' (Tat Twam Asi) is found in the Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda. It means that the infinite, all-pervading, omniscient Supreme Truth/Reality is the consciousness or pure self in you. It is also called a statement of advice to the seekers in as much as it contains advice addressed to the seeker that the supreme reality is the self within him; (iii) 'This Self Is Brahm' (Ayam Atma Brahm) is found in the Mandukya Upanishad in the Atharva Veda. It means that the Atma which is self illuminated and the Supreme Reality/Truth are one and the same (i.e. identical); (iv) I Am Brahm (Aham Brahm Asmi) is found in the Brihadaranyak Upanishad of the Yajur Veda. It proclaims that the conscious principle/element in an individual is nothing other than the total consciousness. This is the statement made by the seeker after attaining self realisation. See also Baal Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 50-52 and Canto 7, verse nos. 40-41.

There are a number of other Upanishads that describe these great sayings of the Vedas, called the Mahavakyas. Some of them are the following :-

(a) According to Painglo-panishad, 3/2 of the Shukla Yajur Veda, they are—(1) that art thou; (2) thou art that; (3) you are Brahm, or you and Brahm are one; and (4) I am Brahm, or I and Brahm are one.

(b) According to Mandal Brahmino-panishad, 2/2/5 of the same Veda, it is 'that is me'.

(c) According to Mandal Brahmino-panishad, 3/1/6, it is 'you and me are one'.

(d) According to Shukar Rahasayo-panishad, 21/1-4 of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—(1) OM salutations! Enlightenment and knowledge is Brahm and vice versa; (2) OM salutations! I am that Brahm; (3) OM salutations! Verily, that is you; (4) OM salutations! This Atma is Brahm. Other Upanishads that highlight the fundamental tenets of the Vedas are Atmabodho-panishad and Atmo-panishad amongst others.]

रसादिपञ्चीकृतभूतसम्भवं भोगालयं दुःखसुखादिकर्मणाम् ।
शरीरमाद्यन्तवदादिकर्मजं मायामयं स्थूलमुपाधिमात्मनः ॥ २८ ॥

rasādipañcīkṛtabhūtasambhavaṃ
bhogālayaṃ duḥkhasukhādikarmaṇām /
śarīramādyantavadādikarmajaṃ
māyāmayaṃ sthūlamupādhimātmanah // 28

28. The wise and enlightened persons regard this gross body—which is created out of the five fundamental elements called Bhuts, which is the medium through which one enjoys or suffers the results of various deeds, good or bad, which is acquired/obtained as a result of the effects of past deeds and actions done by a creature, which has a beginning and an end (i.e. is born and dies), and which is unreal, illusive, deceptive and gross (i.e. is a creation of Maya, and therefore is bound to reflect its characters such as being illusive, false and deceptive)—as the gross manifestation (representative, attribute, title, name, designation, denomination or symbol) of the Atma or soul which is pure consciousness or pure self. [This gross body is the Atma's first body in which it dwells.] (28).

[Note :- The five elements referred above are earth, fire, water, wind and space.]

सूक्ष्मं मनोबुद्धिदशेन्द्रियैर्युतं प्राणैरपञ्चीकृतभूतसम्भवम् ।
भोक्तुः सुखादेरनुसाधनं भवेच्छरीरमन्यद्विदुरात्मनो बुधाः ॥ २९ ॥

sūkṣmaṃ manobuddhidaśendriyairyutaṃ
prāṇairapañcīkṛtabhūtasambhavam /
bhoktuḥ sukhāderanusādhanaṃ bhava-
ccharīramanyadvidurātmano budhāḥ // 29

29. The wise and enlightened persons regard the subtle body—consisting of the mind-intellect complex, the ten sense organs (i.e. their vital functions and perceptions), and the five Prans (vital wind forces or vital airs), a body which is created out of these seventeen elements¹ which are not classified as the base or gross elements called Bhuts, and which is the medium by which the creature experiences sorrows, pains, joys and happiness—as the second body of the creature's Atma or soul which is pure consciousness or pure self (29).

[Note :- ¹The seventeen elements as described above are the mind + the intellect + the ten sense organs representing five subtle perceptions and five functions that the body performs + the five vital wind forces of life = 17.

The five subtle organs of perceptions and five functions that the body performs are as follows--(i) the five organs of perceptions are skin, ear, nose, eye and tongue, and their respective functions are touch, hear, smell, sight, and taste; the five organs of action are hands, legs, mouth, genitals, excretory organs and their functions are to catch, move, eat and speak, to reproduce and excrete. These ten sense organs referred above actually are part of the gross, physical body. Their inclusion in the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect is due to the fact that the mind-

intellect complex directly controls them as do the five Prans which infuse these otherwise inert entities with life.

(ii) The five vital wind forces are the following— (a) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (b) Apaana, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (c) Saman, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (d) Udaan, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (e) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it controls the functioning of the other winds.]

अनाद्यनिर्वाच्यमपीह कारणं मायाप्रधानं तु परं शरीरकम् ।
उपाधिभेदात्तु यतः पृथक् स्थितं स्वात्मानमात्मन्यवधारयेत्क्रमात् ॥ ३० ॥

anādyanirvācyamapīha kāraṇaṃ
māyāpradhānaṃ tu paraṃ śarīrakam /
upādhibhedāttu yataḥ pṛthak sthitaṃ
svātmānamātmanyavadhārayetkramāt // 30

30. (Besides the above two forms of the body, viz. the gross, physical body and the subtle, non-physical body—) There is a third body called the causal body surrounded by the bliss sheath which is the cause of eternal bliss, peace and tranquility. It is without a beginning, it is beyond words to be able to describe it, and it is Maya-intensive in nature (i.e. it is here in this body that Maya or delusions of all kind originate). It surrounds or envelops the soul or the Atma which is pure consciousness, transcendental and supreme entity. It impinges on and is an influence on the latter's interaction with the other two forms of bodies.

In this way a person should distinguish between his pure self called the Atma which is pure consciousness from the other bodies from which it is completely separate and distinct; it does not have any titles, honours, representatives, attributes, names, designations, denominations, features or symbols of any kind like the other bodies. A wise and self-realised enlightened person should visualise this entity as being a resident in his heart (30).

कोशेष्वयं तेषु तु तत्तदाकृतिर्विभाति सङ्गात्स्फटिकोपलो यथा ।
असङ्गरूपोऽयमजो यतोऽद्वयो विज्ञायतेऽस्मिन्परितो विचारिते ॥ ३१ ॥

kośeṣvayaṃ teṣu tu tattadākṛti-
rvibhāti saṅgātsphaṭikopalo yathā /
asaṅgarūpo'yamajo yato'dvayo
vijñāyate'sminparito vicārite // 31

31. Like the 'Sphatik Mani' (i.e. crystal), which is in itself pure and colourless, this Atma (pure self or consciousness) also appears to take up the hues and forms (i.e. characteristics, attributes, virtues, qualities) of the different sheaths with which it is covered or veiled. But if one were to contemplate and ponder deeply into the matter, one shall find (i.e. come to the conclusion) that the Atma is unique, matchless and one of its own kind. Therefore, it is without any company or attachments as well as without a birth or beginning unlike the other sheaths with which it is surrounded and interacts. (31).

[Note :-The Atma lives in a body consisting of various sheaths called 'Koshas'. These sheaths or veils are five in number, and are called the Food or 'Anna Maye Kosh', Vital or 'Pran Maye Kosh', Mental or 'Mano Maye Kosh', Intellect or 'Gyan Maye Kosh', and Bliss or 'Anand Maye Kosh' respectively. Like the crystal, the attributeless and colourless Atma acquires the various attributes and qualities of these sheaths that surround it, because of the fact that the Atma lives in a body consisting of these sheaths, and it cannot remain indifferent to being effected by their individual characteristics and virtues, whether good or bad. Consequentially, the pristine pure Atma appears to have all these taints and scars that these sheaths possess.

The Atma is the pure-self, the pure consciousness which is a microscopic reflection of the vast macrocosmic Soul of the cosmos called Brahm. The Atma provides life or consciousness to the inert layers of matter consisting of the five elements of air, water, space, fire and earth which crystalise to form the five coverings or sheaths around the pure Atma, and together (the Atma and the five sheaths) they create what we call the 'living being', whether plant, animal or humans.

The Panch Kosha :- Or the five sheaths covering or enveloping the Atma are as follows—
(i) The food sheath; (ii) the vital air sheath; (iii) the mental sheath; (iv) the intellectual sheath; (v) and the bliss sheath.

The Food Sheath :- Is the physical body and derives its name because it is nourished by the food eaten by the creature. It consists of five organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin) and five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, genitals and anus).

The Vital Air Sheath :- Is the five-fold faculties of perception (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching), excretion (faeces, urine, sperm, sputum, sweat etc.), digestion (stomach, intestine, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, appendix), circulation (blood stream, artery, vein, capillary, heart) and thinking (the power to entertain, absorb and assimilate new information and thought).

The Mental Sheath :- It consists of the equipment which receives external stimuli through the sense organs and links it to the organs of action. Integrated response of body to the stimuli is done through the mind sheath. It is a continuous flow of thoughts. Because the mind is characterised by being in a state of flux, the mind (mental sheath), which is like a clerk, receives information (as stimuli) from the organs of perception and dispatches them to either the organs of action or the intellect when certain situations demand intelligent thinking and discrimination. Therefore, the mental sheath controls the vital air sheath and the food sheath.

The Intellect Sheath :- It acts as a controlling mechanism over the mind; It regulates, filters and modifies the response to the various stimuli. It has the discriminatory power which the mind, left alone to its own self, lacks.

The intellect sheath is the chief of the whole setup—in fact it controls the mind sheath, and through it, the functioning of the creature. It is the task master that directs the reckless horde of school boys running amok hither and thither, as it were. Those boys who obey this teacher become civilised and educated, while the rest of the bunch remains buffoons or ruffians. The intellect can distinguish between the good and the bad, which the mental sheath cannot. The intellect can see beyond the realm of the known while the mind cannot. The intellect sheath is the spring board for all ideas and ideologies. The intellect helps to stabilise and channelise the mind

even as the dam controls the river and harnesses its immense energy to produce powerful electricity.

These two sheaths—the mind and the intellect—are called the subtle sheaths or bodies. They have no physical structure in conventional terms like the gross or physical body called the food sheath or Anna Maya Kosh (consisting of the organs of perception and organs of action) as well as the air sheath (called the Pran Maya Kosh) of the creature. This subtle sheath has only functional aspect. The mental and intellect sheaths are like software of a computer vis-à-vis the food and vital sheaths which resemble the hardware paraphernalia of the entire system.

The Bliss Sheath :- Is the innermost sheath surrounding the Atma/the soul. It consists of ‘inherent tendencies’ or ‘Vasanas’ and ‘Vrittis’ before they are manifested into thoughts or actions. The intellect, mind etc. perform under the guidance and control of the bliss sheath. It is so-called because an individual experiences relative bliss, happiness, joy, contentedness, peace and tranquility when he is associated with it.

In the waking and dream states, a man experiences constant agitation of the mind, but once he reaches the realm of deep sleep state (bliss sheaths), he feels undisturbed, tranquil, peaceful and full of bliss. All agitations cease here. It is a relative experience vis-à-vis the other sheaths. This sheath is also called the Causal Body of the creature.

The five sheaths are all inane, inert and inactive, and constitute of matter. This together forms the personality of the Jiva. He is conscious of all that his happening around him but these five sheaths are inert themselves. So, naturally, there must be something distinct and separate from these sheaths that lend the Jiva the so-called life or consciousness. That factor which lends life or consciousness to the Jiva is called Atma, pure consciousness or the pure self of the creature. It is also the true identity or self of the Jiva.

	Deep sleeper ⇔	Causal body	
Personality of the	→ Dreamer ⇔	Subtle body	← Atma
Jiva (creature)	Waker ⇔	gross body]

बुद्धेस्त्रिधा वृत्तिरपीह दृश्यते स्वप्नादिभेदेन गुणत्रयात्मनः।

अन्योन्यतोऽस्मिन्व्यभिचारतो मृषा नित्ये परे ब्रह्मणि केवले शिवे॥ ३२॥

buddhestridhā vṛttirapīha drśyate
 svapnādibhedena guṇatrayātmanah /
 anyonyato'sminvyabhicārato mṛṣā
 nitye pare brahmaṇi kevale śive // 32

32. The mind-intellect inherently has three types Gunas¹ or qualities and virtues that determine its fundamental functioning and character. These in turn determine the basic and inherent tendencies and inclinations, called Vrittis that the creature possesses. These special distinguishing virtues and characteristics resemble the three states of consciousness in which the creature exists, viz.—(a) the waking state, (b) the dream state, (c) and the deep sleep state of consciousness, which are called the Jagrat, the Swapana and the Sushupti states of consciousness² respectively.

These three states of consciousness appear to be theoretically isolated chambers, but the actual ground level situation is that they interact with each other (i.e. they cannot be treated in isolation or as isolated entities in water-tight compartments). That is, the mind constantly strays from one state to another. The mind and intellect, called the subtle body that comes in direct contact with the Atma, is corrupted by the combined influences,

or pulls and tugs of all these three. Since these entities are corruptible, the pure and supreme consciousness—which is Atma which is an image of the incorruptible, supreme and transcendental Brahm, which is the supreme truth or reality that is called ‘Shiva’ (one that is beautiful, auspicious, eternal, wise, enlightened and truthful beyond doubt)—obviously cannot be any of these entities.

Therefore, to accuse the Atma of having any of the three Gunas depicted by the mind and intellect, or the different Vrittis that are consequential of these Gunas, and the resultant behaviour of the creature resembling the three states mentioned above are all founded on hearsay and fallacious reasoning, and is wrong and misleading (32).

[Note--¹The three Gunas—The three characteristics inherent present in the creature are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the ‘Vrittis and Vasanas’ (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its soul as a covering or veil.

(a) ‘Sat Guna or quality’ is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature, (b) ‘Raj Guna or quality’ pertains to worldly passions, desires and ambition etc., while (c) ‘Tam Guna or quality’ is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. The permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body—e.g. two men—might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, behaviour, thinking, outlook, action and deeds, wisdom and way of living. This is what is meant when it said that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual, countable specific number that there are actually and physically eighty four Lakh (1 Lakh = 1,00,000) types of bodies of living beings; it only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three ‘Gunas’ and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

The Satwic quality or Guna is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to possess, and is marked by such negative traits as sin, evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of ‘Satvic’ (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of ‘Rajsic’ or ‘Tamsic’ qualities.

²The States of Existence :-The Atma (soul) has three states of existence in a creature —the waking state, the dream state, and the deep sleep state of existence or consciousness. During the ‘waking state’, the Atma acts through the gross body (the physical body) of a man in its interaction with the outside world. During the ‘dream state of existence’, the Atma withdraws from the gross body and limits its interaction to the subtle body (the mind-intellect complex). During the ‘deep sleep state of existence’, the Atma withdraws itself into the causal body consisting of ‘Vasanas’ (inherent passions and desires) and ‘Vrittis’ (inherent tendencies and inclinations).

To explain the above concept, we may take the help of diagram and illustration:—

Man = Pure consciousness or Atma + Causal body (Vasanas)
+ Subtle body (mind-intellect) + Gross body (sense organs)

The body-mind-intellect is inane and inert. The live factor is the pure consciousness or Atma. This pure consciousness functions through its association with the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body, or in other words, the deep sleeper, the dreamer and the waker state of consciousness.

<u>Body</u>	<u>(Consisting of)</u>	<u>Called the</u>	
Gross body (sense organs)		⇔ Waker	
Man → Subtle body (mind-intellect)		⇔ Dreamer	← Atma (pure-
Causal body (Vasanas)		⇔ Deep sleeper	consciousness)

This combination of ‘waker-dreamer-deep sleeper’ states of consciousness of a man is called Microcosm. The pure consciousness has its independent existence from the above three states, and this independence is called the 4th state of consciousness called the ‘Turiya state’ or the blissful state of consciousness (विदानन्द) which has the bliss sheath as its external boundary.

According to Hanso-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, the Atma resides in the heart of the creature which is in an 8-petal lotus. The tendrils (केसर) of this lotus described in this Upanishad represent the waking state of consciousness, the stalk (कर्णिका) represents the dream state of conscious, and the thalamus (लिंग) represents the deep sleep state of consciousness. When a creature abandons/discards the metaphoric habitat or dwelling in the 8-petal lotus represents by his heart and rises above its precincts (just like a householder snapping all his relationships with his home and takes to the path of Vanprastha), it obtains the forth state of consciousness called the ‘Turiya state’. Eventually, when the creature, in the form of his subtle Atma (which according to the definition given to it by the Upanishad, inter alia, is ‘Hans’ which means a ‘Swan’ and is a metaphor for divinity, purity and wisdom) merges with or dissolves in the cosmic ‘Naad’ (all-pervading subtle sound in the cosmos), then the final or the so-called ‘Turiyateet’ stage is achieved (verse no. 8).

The brain has two components —the intellect and the mind. The former is under the direct control of the Atma while the mind is subordinate to the intellect. The mind receives worldly stimuli through the sense organs, passes them to the intellect, obtains instructions from the intellect and passes them on to the organs of action —this state prevails when the man is ‘awake’.

Now, when he is asleep, there are two stages —either he dreams or he does not. During the ‘dream state’, the inherent Vasanas (the hidden passions, yearning and desires) come into play at the sub conscious level and the mind lives up to all those Vasanas in an imaginary world. But when there is no dream, i.e., during the ‘deep sleep state’ of consciousness, the Atma is freed from interference and it reverts back to its original form of being ‘nothingness, having no feelings and no emotions’, just like the case wherein the mirror is removed from the front of a man and his image vanishes from it and the image reverts back or shrinks into its primary source or object,

which in this case is the man himself whose image was formed in the mirror. The Atma is an image of the supreme Brahm. When the mirror of the mind-intellect is removed, it (Atma) reverts back to its primary form which is Brahm. So, it is the 'deep sleep state of consciousness' in which the creature comes in direct contact of his true identity or true self, which is called Atma or pure consciousness.

For the external world, a sleeping man is as good as being dead. For example, if a sleeping man is attacked by someone, he won't resist; he won't even know what has happened just in front of him while he was asleep. He is not dead, but for all practical purposes 'he is as good as dead'. He neither feels pain nor happiness when in a deep sleep state of existence, which is beyond the dream state of sleep. The 'deep sleep state' is called 'Swaprant'—literally meaning 'in a state of suspended animation, or a self-imposed state of coma, or a state of being virtually dead, or coming to a stage voluntarily which is almost like being dead but is not actual death'.

The last stage, called 'Turiyateet', goes beyond the 3rd stage when a man wakes up into this world but remains 'virtually blind or sleeping' as far as his mind is concerned in relation to the gross world. Therefore, he remains awake but does not see; he does not smell, taste, feel and speak. Since all external stimuli fail to arouse his brain, he remains like 'a man sleep-walking'. In the absence of sensory perceptions, he does not feel neither pain nor sorrows, nor happiness and joys. He remains totally oblivious to them. He lives in a state of complete blissfulness.]

देहेन्द्रियप्राणमनश्चिदात्मनां सङ्घादजस्रं परिवर्तते धियः।

वृत्तिस्तमोमूलतयाज्ञलक्षणा यावद्भवेत्तावदसौ भवोद्भवः॥ ३३॥

dehendriyaprāṇamanaścidātmanāṃ
saṅghādajasraṃ parivartate dhiyaḥ /
vṛttistamomūlatayājñalakṣaṇā
yāvadbhavettāvadasau bhavodbhavaḥ // 33

33. The inherent tendencies and inclinations of the intellect, called its Vritti¹, are always changing, i.e. the mind is in a state of flux² because of its constant association with the body (i.e. the gross body), the sense organs (numbering ten), the Prans (numbering five; the vital airs—see verse no. 29), the mind-intellect complex (called the subtle body) and the pure consciousness called the Atma. Since this tendency—to fluctuate, be indecisive and in a state of flux, be subject to the influence of the delusory, misleading, erroneous and deception creating inputs/stimuli from the external world, be attached to the gross and perishable things rather than the imperishable truth which is the ultimate reality—has its origin in the quality called Tamogun³ (characterized by gloom, delusion, deceit, perversion et al.) which is synonymous with ignorance and darkness. Therefore, as long as it stays/lasts, the creature has to continue taking birth in this mundane, entrapping, deluding, artificial and tormenting world (33).

[Note :-¹*Vasanas and Vrittis*-- The pure consciousness (Atma) is the core of a man's personality. It is infinite, pure, all-pervading, omniscient, enlightened, changeless and supreme truth/reality. However, its infinite nature is clouded by the various Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations) and Vasanas (desires and passion inherent in a man) resulting in the creation of a finite, limited, impure, corrupt, not fully enlightened, ever changing personality of the human being—such a person is called the 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer' entity. When the various Vrittis or Vasanas are eliminated or excluded (i.e., catharised), the attitude undergoes transformation and

metamorphosis from a perceiver-feeler-thinker entity (corresponding to the gross body, the mind and intellect collectively called the subtle body) into simple pure consciousness which, in reality, is the true identity of the creature.

²*Mental Flux*—The five states of the mind are the following—(i) Kshipta (क्षिप्त), (ii) Mudh (मुद्ध), (iii) Vikshipta (विक्षिप्त), (iv) Ekagra (एकाग्र) and (v) Nirudha (निरुद्ध). The ‘Kshipta’ is the worst type of mind characterised by extreme recklessness and restlessness. It is susceptible to various negative traits such as confusion, conflicts, anger, anxiety, worry, tension, agitations of all kinds etc. The ‘Mudh’ is the dull, inert and indolent state of mind. These first two states of mind are predominantly ‘Tamas’ in nature.

The ‘Vikshipta’ state is a ‘distracted’ state of mind in which it swings between the extremes of calmness and agitation. This is a ‘Rajasic’ quality.

The ‘Ekagra’ state is a focused or concentrated mind. It is a state in which the mind can keep alert and pin-pointed on any subject it is focusing upon. It helps to cultivate discipline in the aspirant.

The ‘Nirudha’ state is that state of mind in which there is no mental flux of any kind. It is a kind of trance like state of bliss and happiness. The last two states of mind are called ‘Satvik’ qualities of the creature.

³Tamogun is the most mean and basest of the three qualities that a creature has—viz. the Sat, Raj and Tam in this order.]

नेतिप्रमाणेन निराकृताखिलो हृदा समास्वादितचिद्घनामृतः।
त्यजेदशेषं जगदात्तसद्रसं पीत्वा यथाम्भः प्रजहाति तत्फलम्॥ ३४॥

netipramāṇena nirākṛtākhilo
hrdā samāsvāditacidghanāmṛtaḥ /
tyajedaśeṣaṁ jagadāttasadrasaṁ
pītvā yathāmbhaḥ prajahāti tatphalam // 34

34. The wise one should exclude and abandon from his heart the delusory world (or become disinterested in it, or prohibit it from influencing and impinging on the wisdom of the soul), and regard it as untruthful, faulty, illusory, transient and perishable relying upon the axiomatic doctrine ‘Neti-Neti’ etc. proclaimed by the Vedas¹. Instead, the creature should enjoy the taste of nectar represented by eternal, supreme bliss of the pure consciousness established in the creature's own heart. In other words, the creature should accept the essence of the whole existence, which is the true, eternal, sublime and pure Brahm represented by the eternal blissful Atma present in the bosom of the creature². The creature should forsake the rest of the world like a person who drinks the milk of the coconut fruit and throws away its shell (34).

[Note :-¹The words Neti-Neti mean ‘neither this nor that’. Please also see verse no. 17 above. So, this verse refers to the gradual elimination process or negation process whereby the creature first learns what the essential constituents that make up this existence are. Then it starts reflecting on each individual ingredient and deciding whether it reflects its true and un-adulterated identity or not. If not, then it goes to the next ingredient, and then successively all the elements that constitute this worldly existence, one after another, are judged as to their truthfulness and usefulness. Then the wise and erudite creature starts to eliminate them one by one as not being true and only illusory like water in a desert on a hot day. Gradually, by this elimination process, it will find that out of all the constituent factors, it is the Atma/soul/pure consciousness that is the

only truth and real identity of not only the creature but also of the rest of the living world which remains. Further a deep peep into its other aspects shows that this Atma is synonymous with the Parmatma who is the supreme, cosmic Soul of the creation. It is then—when the above clutter and density of fog-like cloud of endless chain of claims and counter-claims are set aside and all debates and confusions are laid to rest—that the creature realises that its ‘true self’ is the same as the Parmatma, and this true self is called the Atma which is present in all the creature uniformly. If this fact firmly takes root in his mind and intellect—and this is self-realisation and enlightenment—the creature further deduces that all the characteristics, attributes, qualities, qualifications and honours which are applicable to the Parmatma should also be applicable to it. This realisation fills it with immense bliss, peace, tranquility, serenity, joy and happiness. All the faults, agitations, blemishes, doubts and confusions are catheterised once and for all.

²The example of the nectar drinking bee would clear the meaning. The bee alights on the flower and single mindedly hunts for the nectar. It remains focused on its search and does not get distracted by any other thing. Once it finds nectar, it becomes so engrossed in it that it is sometimes even trapped by the petals of the flower if it happens to close during the night as some flowers do. Being concerned with the nectar and nothing else, the bee is oblivious of the colour and the habitat of the flower. And once it has drunk it, it abandons the flower as if it has nothing to do with it. In the present case, when the creature has drunk the nectar of truth, the rest of the world is abandoned by it even as the bee abandons the flower.]

कदाचिदात्मा न मृतो न जायते न क्षीयते नापि विवर्धतेऽनवः।
निरस्तसर्वातिशयः सुखात्मकः स्वयम्प्रभः सर्वगतोऽयमद्वयः॥ ३५॥

kadācidātmā na mṛto na jāyate
na kṣīyate nāpi vivardhate'navah /
nirastasarvātiśayaḥ sukhātmakaḥ
svayamprabhaḥ sarvagato'yamadvayaḥ // 35

35. The Atma (pure consciousness) does not die or take birth; it never diminishes nor increases. It is most ancient and primeval, free from all adjectives and descriptions, an image of peace, bliss and happiness, is self illuminated, is all-pervading and omnipresent, and is peerless, matchless, unique and without a parallel (35).

एवंविधे ज्ञानमये सुखात्मके कथं भवो दुःखमयः प्रतीयते।
अज्ञानतोऽध्यासवशात्प्रकाशते ज्ञाने विलीयेत विरोधतः क्षणात्॥ ३६॥

evaṃvidhe jñānamaye sukhātmake
katham bhavo duḥkhamayaḥ pratiyate /
ajñānato'dhyāsaśātprakāśate
jñāne vilīyeta virodhataḥ kṣaṇāt // 36

36. That which is an embodiment or image of supreme bliss and truthful knowledge, how can there ever be a semblance of sorrows, anguish, pains, torments and consternations associated with this world in such an exalted entity (which the Atma is)? Such a conception or perception is a total falsehood, very misleading and deceptive, and arising

out of ignorance. It will vanish in a moment under the light of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment because Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment) and Agyan (ignorance or lack of knowledge) are mutually opposed (inimical and contradictory) to each other (36).

यदन्यदन्यत्र विभाव्यते भ्रमादध्यासमित्याहुरमुं विपश्चितः।
असर्पभूतेऽहिविभावनं यथा रज्ज्वादिके तद्वदपीश्वरे जगत् ॥ ३७ ॥

yadanyadanyatra vibhāvyate bhramāda-
dhyāsamityāhuraṃ vipāścitaḥ /
asarpabhūte'hivibhāvanaṃ yathā
rajjvādiḥ tadvadapīśvare jagat // 37

37. Experts have defined 'Adhyas' as mistakenly—out of ignorance and lack of correct knowledge—recognising or identifying something to be true which in reality it is not (e.g. thinking that the entity 'A' is not A but 'B' and vice-versa). It is misperception and misinterpretation of the reality. Even as one mistakes a rope for a serpent, the gross, artificial world is erroneously imposed on the Ishwar; it is wrongly thought that Ishwar (the macrocosmic causal body of the supreme transcendental Soul of the creation called Brahm) has all the characters of this world, because the world is its creation. (37).

[Note—Since the world is a conception of the mind, for it is the mind which conjures up a magical world according to its inherent tendencies and inclinations under the influence of Maya as described earlier, to say that Atma has done it is a fallacious misrepresentation of facts. The cause of this error is that the Atma is surrounded by Maya, and like the crystal getting affected by the colour of the veil that surrounds it, the Atma also appears to depict all the qualities and characters of Maya, and these include those of the world because the world itself is coloured by the colour of Maya, so to say.]

विकल्पमायारहिते चिदात्मकऽहङ्कार एष प्रथमः प्रकल्पितः।
अध्यास एवात्मनि सर्वकारणे निरामये ब्रह्मणि केवले परे ॥ ३८ ॥

vikalpamāyārahite cidātmaka-
'haṅkāra eṣa prathamāḥ prakalpitaḥ /
adhyāsa evātmāni sarvakāraṇe
nirāmaye brahmaṇi kevale pare // 38

38. The Brahm (the supreme Lord) is without an alternative, is beyond all forms of doubts, is free of all delusions called Maya, is the very cause of all creation, is free from all diseases associated with this existence that afflict this world of delusions, such as the myriad faults, negative traits, various blemishes and innumerable other corrupting influences that are the hallmarks of this world, is peerless and without a parallel, and is pure, eternal and truthful consciousness. The first mistake in relation to this only transcendental supreme cosmic Atma called Brahm is to associate with him the Tamas

quality of ‘Ahankar’ (pride, ego, arrogance, vanity and haughtiness) [Obviously, if the Brahm is an immaculate entity then it is incredulous to attribute it with any quality that has a negative connotation, and Ahankar is definitely one such negative quality.] (38).

इच्छादिरागादिसुखादिधार्मिकाः सदा धियः संसृतिहेतवः परे।
यस्मात्प्रसुप्तौ तदभावतः परः सुखस्वरूपेण विभाव्यते हि नः॥ ३९॥

icchādirāgādisukhādīdharmikāḥ
sadā dhiyaḥ saṁsṛtihetavaḥ pare /
yasmātpṛasuptau tadabhāvataḥ paraḥ
sukhasvarūpeṇa vibhāvyaṭe hi naḥ // 39

39. To associate the Atma, which is only a disinterested and dispassionate witness to all, with the all the different notions and contradictory emotions which are associated with the mind according to its inherent tendencies and inclinations—such as either having desires or not having any, either having mental attachments, love and affections or having dispassion, hatred, revulsion, animosity, enmity, ill-will, jealousy and malice, and either having happiness or sorrows—is the basic cause of this world comprising of birth and death coming into being.

The evidence lies in the fact that during the deep sleep state of consciousness, all these feelings completely vanish or are totally eliminated, resulting in experiencing of sublimity, the peaceful and blissful nature of the Atma. (39).

[Note :-As has been explained earlier, during the deep sleep state of consciousness, the Atma ceases to be bothered by the inputs from the external world, and the mind-intellect stops disturbing it. The latter is virtually non-existent during this state. So, the Atma comes face to face with its own true nature, which is peaceful and blissful. Therefore, how can it be said that the true nature of the Atma is to have any attachment or hatred, have any happiness or sorrow, and having any desires or yearnings. These notions are the characteristic features of this world which takes birth and dies, resulting in a constant cycle of sorrows and happiness, or of love and animosity, or desires and more desires. Since they do not exist in the Atma, it cannot have die and take birth.

Please also refer to verse nos. 31-34 and footnote to verse no. 34.]

अनाद्यविद्योद्भवबुद्धिबिम्बितो जीवः प्रकाशोऽयमितीर्यते चितः।
आत्मा धियः साक्षितया पृथक् स्थितो बुद्ध्यापरिच्छन्नपरः स एव हि॥ ४०॥

anādyavidyodbhavabuddhibimbīto
jīvaḥ prakāśo’yamitīryate citaḥ /
ātmā dhiyaḥ sāksitayā pṛthak sthīto
buddhyāparicchinnaḥ sa eva hi // 40

40. It is out of eternal ignorance of the reality that the intellect and mind seems to have the light known as Chetan, or conscious factor known as life. In other words, the intellect and mind appears to exhibit certain traits such as intelligence, wisdom, thinking capabilities and discrimination powers, but these are because of its association with the

pure consciousness or Atma with which it is closely associated during the waking state of existence. The reflection of the conscious factor in the mind-intellect combine results in the creation of an entity known as the Jiva, or a living creature. The Jiva, in effect therefore, appears to be the reflection of the glowing illumination of the conscious Atma on the screen of the mind-intellect sheath combine. Logically therefore, the Jiva and its habitat the world exist only during the waking state of consciousness. And since the world is a proven false entity having an imaginary existence as a creative conception of the mind, the Jiva who lives in it and is an integral part of the world is also false.

But the fact is quite different—the Atma is a separate entity, it is only a witness to the mind-intellect complex. They also have different habitats—the Atma resides in the causal body while the mind-intellect in the subtle body. That supreme conscious Atma is beyond the reach of and purview of the mind-intellect apparatus (40).

चिद्विम्बसाक्ष्यात्मधियां प्रसङ्गतस्त्वेकत्र वासादनलाक्तलोहवत् ।
अन्योन्यमध्यासवशात्प्रतीयते जडाजडत्वं च चिदात्मचेतसोः ॥ ४१ ॥

cidbimbasākṣyātmadhiyāṃ prasaṅgata-
stvekatra vāsādanalāktalohavat /
anyonyamadhyāsavaśātpratīyate
jaḍājāḍatvaṃ ca cidātmacetasoḥ // 41

41. The Atma which is only a witness to everything (and not a participant) and which is pure undiluted consciousness (the causal body), when it acts through and in close association with the mind-intellect complex (the subtle body), the result is that the Atma's quality of undiluted purity, life-infusing consciousness, enlightenment, wisdom and erudition are superimposed and injected on the inane, inert and lifeless apparatus called the mind-intellect, while at the same time the latter's grossness appears to be superimposed and injected in the former.

This impression of possessing a particular set of Gunas or quality, characteristic and virtues which are not inherent/intrinsic to a particular entity, but it appears to possess it nevertheless because of its close proximity with another entity, is called 'Anonyadhyas'. This example is found in a piece of iron made red hot by coming in contact with fire¹.

As a result of this misjudgment or misconception, we begin to consider the five inert, inane layers—stretching from the bliss sheath to the food sheath—as the pure consciousness or Atma personified as the entity known as the creature or Jiva² (41).

[Note--¹When iron is heated in high-temperature fire, it glows red hot. It appears to have acquired the glow, hotness and temperature of the fire in its whole mass or body, and the fire appears to have spread uniformly across every pore and molecule of the iron piece. They cannot be separated from one another. The iron appears to be a 'ball of fire' and the fire appears to be shaped like a 'ball of iron'. Similarly, the subtle body (i.e. mind-intellect complex) becomes soaked by the fiery glow of super consciousness of the Atma so much so that the latter and the former appear to be inseparable from each other. But this is not the actual case.

²That is, we erroneously begin to consider the Atma, which is the true identity of the Jiva/creature as being synonymous with the visible, corrupted form of the Jiva consisting of the gross body, the subtle body and the casual body.]

गुरोः सकाशादपि वेदवाक्यतः सञ्ज्ञातविद्यानुभवो निरीक्ष्य तम्।
स्वात्मानमात्मास्यमुपाधिवर्जितं त्यजेदशेषं जडमात्मगोचरम्॥ ४२॥

guroḥ sakāśādapi vedabākyataḥ /
sañjātavidyānubhavo nirīkṣya tam /
svātmānamātmasthamupādhivarjitam
tyajedaśeṣam jaḍamātmagocaram // 42

42. So, one should take up the company of a wise and learned teacher called a Guru, and at the same time, rely on the axiomatic doctrines expounded in the form of the great declarations or sayings of the Vedas. By doing so and by contemplation, reflection and meditation, one should become aware of the true nature of the pure conscious self and experience it.

When this self-realisation or awareness, which is called true enlightenment and pure erudition about the formless, attributeless and pure conscious Atma residing in one's heart dawns on the creature, it should completely forsake the inert, inane and gross forms of products, such as the body etc. which were hitherto erroneously regarded as having life and consciousness and were treated as the identity of the creature (42).

[Note :- In brief, once the creature realises that what he mistakenly thought was his pure self was in fact lifeless and dead, he should immediately abandon it. He must realise that his true form is the innermost Atma/soul and not the inane sheaths surrounding it.]

प्रकाशरूपोऽहमजोऽहमद्वयोऽसकृद्विभातोऽहमतीव निर्मलः।
विशुद्धविज्ञानघनो निरामयः सम्पूर्ण आनन्दमयोऽहमक्रियः॥ ४३॥

prakāśarūpo'hamajo'hamadvayo-
'sakṛdvibhāto'hamatīva nirmalaḥ /
viśuddhavijñānaghano nirāmayah
sampūrṇa ānandamayo'hamakriyah // 43

43. [The true nature of the Atma is described below in verse nos. 43-44—] 'I' (the Atma) am self illuminated, am without a birth or beginning (i.e. I am what I am, and have no progenitor), am peerless, without a second or any parallel, am eternal, constant, perpetual and infinite, am pure consciousness which can be experienced and witnessed, am most sublime, pristine pure, undiluted and uncorrupt, am an embodiment and a treasury of pure, pristine knowledge that is well established and irrefutable, am disease free and healthy (i.e. without any faults associated with the causal body, the gross body and the subtle body)¹, am without any inclination to do anything (i.e. not being attached to any deed or action done by the body; to be dispassionate, detached and indifferent to all deeds

and actions, and be simply a witness to whatever is happening without getting passionate about or involved in it), and am an embodiment or image of supreme calm, serenity, bliss, happiness, joy, contentedness, peace and tranquility (43).

[Note—¹The faults associated with the causal body pertains to Maya and its attendant problems such as the creation of various Vasanas and Vrittis; the faults of the subtle body are related to the mind and intellect such as ignorance, false beliefs and convictions, false determines and wrong instructions to the organs of the body etc.; the faults pertaining to the gross body are obviously the innumerable problems related with it, such as diseases, old age and decay, bad deeds and actions, and such other negative things that have direct bearing on the body.]

सदैव मुक्तोऽहमचिन्त्यशक्तिमानतीन्द्रियज्ञानमविक्रियात्मकः ।
अनन्तपारोऽहमहर्निशं बुधैर्विभावितोऽहं हृदि वेदवादिभिः ॥ ४४ ॥

sadaiva mukto'hamacintyaśaktimān-
atīndriyajñānamavikriyātmakaḥ /
anantapāro'hamaharniśaṁ budhai-
rvibhāvito'haṁ hṛdi vedavādibhiḥ // 44

44. I am always and eternally liberated and free from any shackles, am a fountain-head of an unfathomable, bountiful, immense and measureless stupendous source of infinite cosmic energy which is beyond comprehension and imagination, am without any body having gross organs which impose limitations (i.e. I am formless and attributeless, and at the same time, boundless), am an image and an embodiment of Gyan (true knowledge, erudition and wisdom), am without any deformations and faults (such as a changing, fidgety and faltering nature), and am beyond imagination or visualization because I am without a beginning or end.

Experts in the Vedas (i.e. those who are deeply steeped in the wisdom propounded by the Vedas) always contemplate upon me (i.e. fix their attention and try to experience me) in their hearts (44).

[Note :- Verse nos. 43-44 described the nature of the Atma of the creature. It is an extension of the concept declared by the four great sayings of the Vedas as described in verse nos. 24-27 of this Canto earlier. The word 'I' and 'Me' refer to the Atma.

In this context it is pertinent to quote another great version of Ramayan called Ram Charit Manas by the legendary saint poet philosopher Goswami Tulsidas. While describing the Atma in Lanka Kanda, Doha 117, Chaupai 2-5, it says “The Jiva represented by its Atma is immortal and eternal. It is a fraction of the supreme Ishwar who is the cosmic divinity. It is conscious, faultless, untainted by Maya, and a natural treasure of happiness and bliss. Such an exalted soul has allowed itself to be dominated and influenced by Maya. It has been caught in the trap laid on its own like a parrot or a monkey. That which is gross and lifeless (the materialistic world) has been tied to that which is inherently subtle and sublime (the Atma) by a strong knot. Though this knot is misconceived and imaginary, it is nevertheless difficult to untie. Ever since the Atma had allowed itself to be knotted in the Maya-created snare, it has become what is called ‘worldly’ or that which appears to belong to the world. Obviously, there can be no happiness until this knot is untied. The Vedas and Purans have prescribed a number of ways to do it.”]

एवं सदात्मानमखण्डितात्मना विचारमाणस्य विशुद्धभावना।
हन्यादविद्यामचिरेण कारकै रसायनं यद्वदुपासितं रुजः॥ ४५॥

evaṃ sadātmānamakhaṇḍitātmanā
vicāramāṇasya viśuddhabhāvanā /
hanyādavidyāmacireṇa kārakai
rasāyanam yadvadupāsitaṃ rujaḥ // 45

45. This constant contemplation and deep reflection upon the true and pure super consciousness residing in the bosom of a creature creates a sense of emotional purity and clarified sense of discrimination and wisdom, which in turn destroys/eliminates/removes/catheterizes the fallacious and erroneous feeling of being the 'doer' of deeds and its accompanying lack of correct perception or interpretation of the self, which is called Avidya (ignorance or lack of proper and truthful knowledge). [That is, the creature realises that the Atma is not the 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer' entity as it was mistakenly made out to be.] This is similar to the case when the constant use of medicine can get rid of the disease from its roots (45).

विविक्त आसीन उपारतेन्द्रियो विनिर्जितात्मा विमलान्तराशयः।
विभावयेदेकमनन्यसाधनो विज्ञानदृक्केवल आत्मसंस्थितः॥ ४६॥

vivikta āsīna upāratendriyo
vinirjitātmā vimalāntarāśayaḥ /
vibhāvayedekamananyasādhano
vijñānadṛkkevala ātmasamsthitaḥ // 46

46. A person desirous of reflecting upon the true, pure, real and uncorrupted form of the Atma should sit in a lonely and calm place (which is undisturbed, peaceful, serene and secluded), remove (de-link or retract) his sense organs from their objects in this world, and exercise control over (i.e. put a restraint upon) his subtle body. [That is, he must first start from the outer gross organs of the body by controlling them from swerving towards their respective objects of gratification in this world, and then proceed gradually inwards step by step. As a second step, he should restrain his subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect.]

He must not take the help of any other means (i.e. he must not be confused by so many doctrines and paths to achieve his object as well as various remedies prescribed by so many advisors or teachers). Instead, he should rely on introspection and insight acquired by the pursuance of truthful knowledge only. He should transfix (i.e. rivet and focus) his attention (i.e. wean it away from all diversionary tendencies) on the Atma or pure consciousness with a mind and intellect that have been purified and cleansed of their all their impurities and corruptions. After all this preparatory stage, he should introspect, think, contemplate, meditate and deeply reflect upon nothing else but the Atma/pure consciousness (46).

[Note :- The main objective of verse no. 46 is to concentrate the mind on the supreme truth or reality which is pure consciousness residing in the heart or bosom of the seeker. The mind which controls the food sheath (i.e. sense organs) is full of agitation, restlessness and flux. It has to be controlled and guided by the intellect. So, the first step is to control and withdraw the mind from all external distractions of this world. This can be done by three means—(i) The Path of Karma, or doing assigned duties without being attached to them; (ii) The Path of Devotion or Worship and (iii) The Path of Knowledge. It is the third path which is being referred to in this verse. Please also refer Canto 7, verse nos. 59-60. By introspection, contemplation and deeply pondering over the matter and acquisition of truthful knowledge, we are able to distinguish and discriminate between what is true and pure, and what is falsehood, illusionary and corrupted. It helps us to eliminate all the unscrupulous activities and clutter, and instead divert our attention inwards. Taken differently, we can witness the divine, pure, self-illuminated spark of consciousness present in a dormant form in all of us by the following method—the Atma manifests itself through the gross body, the subtle body and the casual body. The gross body (sense organs) can be willfully controlled by the mind under the overall guidance of the intellect; the subtle body can be controlled by discrimination as well as proper and truthful knowledge. The causal body on the other hand, can be controlled by the integration and coordination of the subjective and objective minds. When all the three are controlled, the Vasanas and/or Vrittis (worldly passions and yearnings; the inherent tendencies and inclinations) clouding the Atma vanish. This results in the pure consciousness shining through the whole existence of the creature.]

विश्वं यदेतत्परमात्मदर्शनं विलापयेदात्मनि सर्वकारणे ।
पूर्णश्चिदानन्दमयोऽवतिष्ठते न वेद बाह्यं न च किञ्चिदान्तरम् ॥ ४७ ॥

viśvaṃ yadetatparamātmadarśanaṃ
vilāpayedātmani sarvakāraṇe /
pūrṇaścidānandamayo'vatiṣṭhate
na veda bāhyaṃ na ca kiñcidāntaram // 47

47. 'This world is nothing else but an image of the macrocosmic transcendental supreme Soul called Parmatma (which is the sublime, supreme, immutable and irrefutable truth and reality in this world)'—realising the truth of this maxim, the seeker should merge this world with the Atma (pure consciousness) which is the microscopic counter-part of the supreme Soul that resides in the heart of the creature.

In this way, when one establishes oneself, or identifies oneself with the pure consciousness which is sublime, blissful and eternal, the creature/seeker/aspirant attains supreme bliss, contentedness, peace and tranquility. As a result, being perpetually engrossed in bliss of self realisation and especially when the external world that had been disturbing him so far has been expunged from his mental record, he loses awareness or knowledge of any thing, whether internal or external to him (for he has literally merged himself with the all-pervading macrocosmic supreme Soul and remains in drinking the nectar of bliss and tranquility provided by it) (47).

[Note :- (i) The reader is advised to refer to verse no. 53 in this context. (ii) The external world exists only till the time the Atma perceives it through the mind-intellect apparatus. When the wise creature diverts its mind away from the world and focuses it on the inner self, the Atma loses awareness of the world. It begins to remain submerged in the joy of self realisation. It naturally

avoids going back to the world that had been giving it so much trouble. With erudition and wisdom the creature also realises the falseness of the external world. So, once it tastes the nectar of peace and tranquility that comes with self realisation, it does not want to revert to the painful experience that it had when it was active in the external world.

As we have already seen earlier, the creature has three states of consciousness—the waking state when the pure consciousness functions through the gross body, the dreaming state when the pure consciousness functions through the subtle body, and the deep sleep state when the pure consciousness functions through the causal body. There is a 4th state called the ‘Turiya’ state also. The pure consciousness has its independent existence from the above three states, and this independence is called the 4th state of consciousness of the Atma and is called the ‘Turiya state’ or the blissful state of consciousness which has the bliss sheath as its external covering.]

पूर्व समाधेरखिलं विचिन्तयदोङ्कारमात्रं सचराचरं जगत् ।
तदेव वाच्यं प्रणवो हि वाचको विभाव्यतेऽज्ञानवशान्न बोधतः ॥ ४८ ॥

pūrvam samādherakhilam vicintaye-
doṅkāramātram sacarācaram jagat /
tadeva vācyaṁ praṇavo hi vācako
vibhāvyate'jñānavaśāna bodhataḥ // 48

48. Before the state of Samadhi¹ is achieved (as described in verse no. 47), one must reflect and think that the whole animate as well as the inanimate (i.e. the movable and immovable) world consists of the ethereal and sublime entity known as ‘OMKAR’ whose word-symbol is the divine word OM. [This Omkar is also called Pranav and it is synonymous with Brahm.]

The OMKAR is the speaker or narrator, while the world is the expression of what the divine speaker wishes to express. In other words, the world symbolizes what the divine speaker OMKAR is trying to narrate, explain, elucidate, manifest, bring forth, express and reveal in understandable, discernible and visible form. Since narration and speaking necessitates the use of words, the divinity of OMKAR has been conceived in the form of the ethereal word OM. Hence, the whole world that speaks is nothing else but a revelation and manifestation of what the speaker wished to narrate. It is his expression².

It is out of ignorance (i.e. lack of correct and truthful knowledge and wisdom) that the world appears to be for real. As soon as wisdom and enlightenment dawns on the creature, none of such delusions and misconceptions about the authenticity of the world lasts or persist (48).

[Note--¹The concept of Samadhi :- Contemplation and meditation lead to Samadhi. Yogis also experience supreme bliss during Samadhi. Simply put, it is a trance like state when the consciousness has no perception of the external, physical world of sense objects and, on the contrary, it experiences the bliss of the pure self. This leads to an ecstatic state.

The term Samadhi is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘Dha’ which means to put or to place. To this root are added prefixes ‘Sam’ (well) and ‘Aa’ (fully). Thus the word Samadhi means ‘putting or placing the mind fully well’. In Vedanta, Samadhi means the knowledge that identifies the Atma with Brahm. It is commonly used to mean ‘absorption or meditation’. The state of Samadhi is free from the dual defects (faults) of duality (that the creature and Brahm are separate) and effort (diligence in deeds and actions aimed towards the goal). That is, during the state of

Samadhi, the creature loses its self independent identity and no effort is then required to experience the bliss of the supreme realisation of the absolute Truth— which is the Atma and Brahm are the same, are infinite and eternal.

There are two types of Samadhis— (i) Savikalpa Samadhi (absorption characterised by the perception of division, distinction or difference) and (ii) Nirvikalpa Samadhi (absorption free from division, distinction or difference). The Savikalpa Samadhi is reached after long practice of the tenet 'I am Brahm' (i.e., there is no difference between me and Brahm). Unlike this practice wherein the seeker had to exert himself to maintain the thought that 'I am Brahm', during the Savikalpa Samadhi there is an effortless thought of 'I am Brahm'. This Samadhi is characterised by the perception of the distinction of the triumvirate consisting of (a) Meditator (Dhyatr), (b) Meditated object (Dheya) and (c) Meditation process (Dhyan). Though the Meditator has withdrawn his mind from all thoughts and maintains a continuous flow of a single pointed thought that 'I am Brahm', he still continues to have the distinction between (a) I, the Meditator, (b) the Object, that I am Brahm and (c) the very physical act of meditation. Nevertheless, by virtue of the strength of knowledge that 'he is Brahm', the triumvirate becomes illusionary or imaginary just like the perception of various shapes of water— such as whirlpool, wave, bubble, foam/froth etc. are nothing else but water, or the water in a cup, a glass, a jar, a tray, a pond, a lake, a river, and ocean may have different names and contours but are water nonetheless. Sri Sankaracharya has cited the example of a clay elephant (Sarva Vedanta Siddhanta Saar Sangraha, verse nos. 821-822) to say that the elephant form does appear inspite of the knowledge that it is, after all, clay. Similarly, inspite of the knowledge that everything is Brahm, the triumvirate does exist in Savikalpa Samadhi.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi—during this state, the ideal that I am the all-pervading Brahm takes firm root and it puts an end to all ignorance. The term means 'no division or distinction or difference'. Here the seeker has no distinction between the triad of meditator or meditated object and the process of meditation.

The main difference between these two Samadhis is that in the former there is the 'knowledge or awareness' that I am Brahm while in the latter it is the 'being' of I am Brahm. The difference of knowing and being is quite evident. It is one thing to theoretically 'know' that I am Brahm and quite different to 'be' Brahm. When the thought I am Brahm becomes effortless and complete, the meditator loses the distinction between himself, the object (Brahm) and the process (meditation)— all merge into one entity. In this Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the meditator loses the distinction between himself (I) and the object (Brahm). As a result, the ego that 'I am meditating upon Brahm' is vanished, and with it, the triad. By extension, it means 'there is no experience of distinction between the knower (meditator) and the known (Brahm)'.

In Savikalpa Samadhi, the thought 'I am Brahm' is available for perception while in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the same thought is not available for perception. A lump of salt floating in water will be seen as distinct from water (Savikalpa Samadhi) but when that lump of salt dissolves in water, no one can see it; there is no distinction between the water and the salt (Nirvikalpa Samadhi).

The Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the plunging of the consciousness into the ocean of bliss encapsulated inside the causal body of the creature. All ignorance pertaining to the world is dispelled and therefore the world comes to an end simply because it exists only due to ignorance. Age, caste, position, opinion— none of these is a bar in entering the chamber of the self during Samadhi. It is open to all who seek it.

To conclude, we can say that Samadhi means that state when the seeker attains the last stage in meditation when there is no agitation, and its place is taken over by utter silence or trance like state. In that silence, the cessation of the flow of thoughts results in annihilation of the mind, and with it, the body. When the thought processes cease, there can be no discrimination taking place. When discrimination ceases, the intellect cannot exist. Hence, in that final moment of silence, when the mind and intellect are dissolved—the thoughts are vanquished, the mind is

conquered, discrimination is absent and the intellect is annihilated—the erstwhile individual merges with the infinite reality, resulting in supreme and endless bliss and beatitude.

²That is, even as words spoken to express any thing do not have any physical existence, for they are simply vibrations in the air that travel in the form of waves from the speaker to the hearer of the sound, this world too does not have any physical existence that can be tangibly grasped. Its existence is there because it can be seen and perceived even as the sound is there because it can be heard. But even as sound waves traveling through ether cannot be caught hold of, the world too cannot be caught. Expression of what Omkar wished to say is a metaphoric way of saying that it is a revelation of what Brahm had conceived in his mind at the beginning of creation. Once produced, the same sound can have different meaning to different people; the same world revealed by the mind of Brahm had different meaning to different people depending upon their own mental caliber.]

अकारसंज्ञः पुरुषो हि विश्वको ह्युकारकस्तैजस ईर्यते क्रमात् ।
प्राज्ञो मकारः परिपठ्यतेऽखिलैः समाधिपूर्वं न तु तत्त्वतो भवेत् ॥ ४९ ॥

akārasamjñah puruṣo hi viśvako
hyukārakastaijasa īryate kramāt /
prājño makārah paripaṭhyate'khilaiḥ
samādhipūrvam na tu tattvato bhavet // 49

49. The word OM has three letters—A, U, M. Out of these— ‘A’ represents the Vishwa (i.e. the waking state of consciousness at the micro level), ‘U’ represents the Taijas (i.e. the dreamer state of consciousness at the micro level), and ‘M’ represents the Pragya (i.e. the deep sleeper state of consciousness at the micro level). This arrangement is suitable for the pre-Samadhi state. From the view point of fundamentals and essential truth, when correct knowledge is acquired by deep insight, there is no such distinction or separation or divisions between the three states of consciousness. [That is, as soon as Samadhi is achieved, the three seemingly independent and distinctive existences dissolve and become interchangeable with one another; or in other words, they coalesce with each other and become one.] (49).

[Note :- (i) ¹The concept of *Samadhi* appearing in verse nos. 46-49 is that state when the seeker attains the last stage in meditation when there is no agitation, and its place is taken over by utter silence or trance like state. In that silence, the cessation of the flow of thoughts results in annihilation of the mind, and with it, the body. When the thought processes cease, there can be no discrimination taking place. When discrimination ceases, the intellect cannot exist. Hence, in that final moment of silence, when the mind and intellect are dissolved—the thoughts are vanquished, the mind is conquered, discrimination is absent and the intellect is annihilated—the erstwhile individual merges with the infinite reality, resulting in supreme and endless bliss. (ii) The word OM represents the macrocosmic form of the supreme Brahm. It constitutes of sound which is an element of space, which in turn is the subtlest amongst the five basic elements which are earth, fire, water, wind and space.]

विश्वं त्वकारं पुरुषं विलापयेदुकारमध्ये बहुधा व्यवस्थितम् ।
ततो मकारे प्रविलाप्य तैजसं द्वितीयवर्णं प्रणवस्य चान्तिमे ॥ ५० ॥

viśvaṃ tvakāraṃ puruṣaṃ vilāpaye-
 dukāramadhye bahudhā vyavasthitam /
 tato makāre pravilāpya taijasam
 dvitīyavarṇaṃ praṇavasya cāntime // 50

50. [The steps to be followed for enabling the seeker to coalesce all these three states of existence into one indivisible whole which is immutable and uniform, the state when Samadhi is achieved is achieved, is being outlined here.]

The seeker should focus his attention and endeavour to coalesce or merge the Vishwa representing the 'Viraat Purush' who has revealed himself in myriad of forms which are as variable as the world itself, and who is represented by the letter A of the word OM, with the second form called Taijas represented by the second letter U. Finally, coalesce or merge the first two with the third and the last letter M representing Pragma (50).

[Note—(1)Yoga is the medium to be employed for this purpose. The word Yoga means union of two entities, and meditation and contemplation. It is the union of the three states of consciousness that is the aim of Yoga; it brings about a merger of the individual soul with the cosmic Soul. Since any merger process entails a step by step progress, union of the Atma with the Parmatma would also need a patient and step by step progress.

(2) We have already seen in note to verse no.31 and 32 above about the three states in which the consciousness exists and the three types of bodies of a creature. Now, since the individual creature is a microcosmic representative of the vast and infinite macrocosm, these three states are relevant to the latter also. Their relationship is as follows—

Pure consciousness functioning at the individual creature's level-----	Pure consciousness functioning at the cosmic level
(a) Gross body/waker—'Vishwa'-----	Total gross bodies—'Viraat'
(b) Subtle body/dreamer—'Taijas'-----	Total subtle bodies—'Hiranyagarbha'
(c) Causal body/deep sleeper -----	Total causal bodies—'Ishwar'
-----'Pragya'	

Thus, the entire creation is visualised as a revelation of the cosmic ethereal sound represented by the divine word OM, and each letter of this word has been visualised as being representative of a particular state of existence of this creation. So when the full word OM is pronounced, these three letters obviously merge indistinguishably into one another to produce a wholesome sound represented by the word OM, symbolically merging the three states of existence into one composite whole. This composite whole is the same as the complete word OM.

This example is used to highlight how it is practically possible for a Yogi to merge the three states of his existence, which seemingly are independent of each other like these three individual letters A, U and M, into one another. Even as these three letters mean nothing in themselves if taken separately but acquire stupendous potentials when taken together, similarly these three states of existence of the creature have no substance and relevance for his spiritual peace and liberation as long as they are considered separately. It is only when their distinctiveness is removed by the means of Yoga the aspirant can hope to achieve total bliss and tranquility. Since peace, calmness, happiness, beatitude and felicity are the hallmarks of emancipation, once the creature removes artificial distinctions between the three types of his existence as well as between the world and the vast cosmos, he symbolically becomes liberated and delivered from the world even while he is alive and going about his chores in a routine manner.]

मकारमप्यात्मनि चिद्घने परे विलापयेत्प्राज्ञमपीह कारणम्।
सोऽहं परं ब्रह्म सदा विमुक्तिमद्विज्ञानदृङ्मुक्त उपाधितोऽमलः॥ ५१ ॥

makāramapyātmani cidghane pare
vilāpayetprājñamapīha kāraṇam /
so'haṁ paraṁ brahma sadā vimuktima-
dvijñānadṛṅmukta upādhito'malaḥ // 51

51. Then, one should ultimately coalesce the letter M representing Pragna, which is the causal body of the creature harbouring it's individual Atma or soul, with the cosmic causal body representing the supreme macrocosmic Ishwar who is also called the Parmatma or the transcendental Soul of the entire creation. The latter is a fountainhead and infinite treasury of consciousness.

Once this merger process is complete, one would realise that one is none other than but the supreme transcendental Brahm himself, that Brahm who is eternally and infinitely liberated, who is an embodiment, a fountainhead and treasure of infinite and truthful wisdom and enlightened erudition, who is without (beyond the purview of) any titles, honours, attributes, names, designations, qualities and virtues, and who is pristine pure, uncorrupt, undiluted and immaculate (51).

[Note :- The word OM is a sound symbol representing the supreme reality called Brahm. Brahm is not an object that can be perceived by sense organs, nor can it be comprehended by the mind or a thought that can be reflected upon by the intellect using its discriminatory faculty. It is beyond human comprehension—i.e. it is unknown to humankind. To understand anything which is unknown, one has to proceed from the known factors. An unknown entity cannot be explained by using other unknown factors. Of all the factors known to man, the subtlest is sound. The realm of the 'known' world consists of five elements—earth, water, fire, air and space in progressive order of subtlety. Different permutations and combinations of these five elements constitute the entire realm of factors known to man, which is called the 'creation'.

Of the five elements, Space is the subtlest, and Sound is the essence of space. Sound is created only in space (for instance, the gap between our palms helps us to clap, but in a piece of wood, there is no space, hence no sound can be created). This sound is the subtlest because it can be perceived by only one sense organ, e.g. ear. It directly impinges on the mind and intellect apparatus. It is considered as the very first manifestation of the supreme truth since the unmanifest truth lies just beyond the manifested world. This being so, sound is the best and the subtlest vehicle to transport one from the 'terrestrial world of the known' to the 'transcendental world of the unknown'.

The question is why OM is selected out of all the sounds known to mankind to represent the supreme Brahm. The reason is that this single word represents the entire phenomenon of sound. It consists of three different and distinct sounds—viz. 'A' which is a throat sound, emanating from the root of the tongue; 'U' is created by rolling forward of the muscles of the tongue between the root and the lip of the mouth; and the letter 'M' is the concluding sound produced by closing of the lips. Hence all articulate sounds are aptly represented by the three letters A, U, M of the word OM. This word is a coordination of all that is indicative of life because only a living entity can speak, and not a dead entity.

OM represents, therefore, the supreme truth/reality which pervades the three states of consciousness—the waker (Viswa), the dreamer (Taijas) and the deep sleeper (Pragna) states of

consciousness of the creature in the terrestrial realm of the ‘known world’ of the creation called microcosm as far as the creature is concerned. The same logic when extended to the cosmos results in OM representing the cosmic waker (Viraat), the cosmic dreamer (Hiranyagarbh) and cosmic deep sleeper (Eswara) aspect of macrocosm.

The silence that follows the sounding of the word OM (i.e. after closure of the lips) is called ‘Amtra-OM’. This silence represents the forth state of consciousness called Turiya which is all blissful and a transcendental reality. Since sound emanates (A), expands/progresses (U) and collapses/merges (M) back into space—it naturally follows that space existed before the very advent of sound. Hence this fourth state of consciousness represents that ‘Turiya state’ or the pre-sound and post-sound state of all-pervading space. This silence is bliss, serenity, placidity and tranquility.

But the most astounding thing about the cosmic silence is that it is not inert and inane because it has the capacity to generate or create sound. And anything that ‘creates’ must have a life infusing capability. Taking a leaf from microbiology, a cell must have a nucleus so the space must also, logically, have a nucleus. This nucleus is the Atma or the soul of the cosmos or, in other words, the macrocosmic soul (Parmatma) of the cosmos which is the counterpart of the microcosmic soul (Atma) of the Jiva.

If there were no silence, we cannot hear the sound. It is the background of the silence which enables us to hear the sound in the first place. Therefore, the word symbol OM represents the entire gamut of manifest world of plurality as well as the un-manifest world of Reality. OM, the sound, represents the former (manifest) world while the silence represents the latter (un-manifest) world. When this all embracing, all-pervading, blissful internal cosmic silence is reached, the seeker becomes one with the Supreme Reality, a state of God or self realisation.

The principle by whose mere presence the intellect thinks, the mind feels, and the body perceives, is the ‘Subject’, the substratum for all the experiences of the body, mind, and intellect. This principle that lends its light to every being is the divine principle OM, or Atman (the Self), according to Vedanta.

It would be pertinent here to quote extracts from two Upanishads that define OM very succinctly. They are (a) Ram Tapiniopanishad, canto 3, verse no.5-9, and (b) Pranavo Panishad which has only 13 verses dedicated to OM.

(a) Ram Tapiniopanishad, canto 3, verse no.5-9—“ The divine word OM is imperishable and immortal. The entire visible world is but a manifestation/revelation of that invisible divine entity. Whatever existed, whatever exists and whatever shall ever exist as well as any time-space dimension which is beyond these three are nothing else but a manifestation or an extension of OM. It encompasses all and is encompassed by all. The word OM is the divine name referring to the entity called Parmatma, literally meaning the supreme Soul. It is the macrocosmic form of the microcosmic soul residing in the individual creature. Although the supreme Brahm is indivisible and cannot be fractioned, we hypothetically split his entire being into four stages or states of existence to fully understand or grasp his full form or nature.

The supreme Soul represented by the word OM has so-called four states of existence— viz (a) The waking state of consciousness called ‘Jagrat’ (or Vishwa), (b) the dream state of consciousness called ‘Swapna’ (or Sukshama or Taijas), (c) the deep sleep state of consciousness called ‘Pragna’ and (d) the supreme blissful state of consciousness called ‘pure Brahm’ which is beyond the earlier three states of consciousness or existence. It is called the ‘Turiya’ state of consciousness. To begin with, the 1st state is described here:- During the waking state of consciousness, the entire manifest world is its (Brahm’s) body. It is related to this gross world and is conscious of its existence through the seven constituent parts that constitutes this world such as Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha, Maha, Janaha, Tapaha, Satyamaha.

The soul perceives this world (or comes in contact with it and reacts with it) by its five organs of perception and five organs of action, the five Prans (the vital wind forces which control/regulate life) and four internal organs— totaling 19 in all. These are called the so-called

‘Mouth’ of the soul (because it is through them that the soul partakes of this world). The entity that enjoys and experiences this world is called the ‘Viraat’ at the macrocosmic level and ‘Vishwa’ at the microcosmic level. The body is called the ‘gross body’ of the creature. This is the 1st step to understand the supreme Soul called ‘Parmeshwar’ (or the supreme Lord) (5).

The 2nd state of existence of the creature is called the ‘dreamer state’ when the external stimuli cease to effect the mind but the inherent tendencies called ‘Vasnaas’ create an imaginary world of perceptions and actions which are together and compositely called ‘a dream’. It is not gross like the 1st stage, and is called the subtle state of existence which is also called ‘Taijas’. This Taijas is the microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic soul called ‘Hiranyagarbha’. It has all the constituent parts of the 1st step or stage as described in the preceding verse but instead of being gross in the sense that it is in contact with the delusionary outside world, it is instead more subtle in nature being based on the mind and its capacity to imagine and fly (6).

The ‘sleeping state’ during which the person does not desire/wish to enjoy any of the objects of this materialistic world and is neither conscious of their existence, a state when he does not even dream of any imaginary non-existent world, such a state of existence is called the ‘deep sleep state of consciousness’. The body which houses this state is called the casual body, and it corresponds to Parmatma in its microcosmic form called ‘Pragna’ which has its macrocosmic counterpart in the ‘Eswar’ (Ishwar).

This casual body encloses the soul which is surrounded by the bliss sheath. The soul is separated from the surrounding cosmos by these three imaginary veils or sheaths— the gross body (verse no. 5), the subtle body (verse no. 6) and the casual body (verse no. 7).

As soon as these are dissolved or removed, it (the soul) enjoys a state of merger with the cosmos— i.e., the only thing that separates the macrocosmic ‘Viraat’ from the microcosmic ‘soul’ is the bliss sheath. Therefore this ‘Pragna’ state is the 3rd leg or form of Parmatma (7). The supreme Soul representing the soul of the creature is the Parmatma or the Lord of all that exists. He is omniscient and all pervading. He is the very cause of creation, its sustenance and its annihilation of the whole cosmos. He is wise, erudite, sagacious, enlightened and knowledgeable in every respect, but paradoxically not at the same time; he knows as well as is ignorant of anything; he has never been seen or observed, never been used and never been caught, grasped and comprehended by anyone; he has no attributes, qualities, virtues and characteristics; he is beyond the purview of thought, imagination, intellect and conception; he cannot be indicated or represented by any known signs, symbols or formulas; he is the only eternal, majestic, powerful, almighty and stupendously magnificent entity called the ‘soul’ or Atma which can be experienced and in which there is a total lack of deceit, conceit, fraud, deceptions, imposturing, falsehoods, delusions and artificiality. He is eternally blissful, calm, tranquil, serene and peaceful; he is auspicious as well as benevolent, magnanimous, munificent, kind and gracious. He is non-dual, without a second, immutable, indivisible and unique— such an entity is called the supreme transcendental Brahman by those who are wise, erudite, sagacious, enlightened and knowledgeable about the universal truth and absolute reality. This entity is the 4th state of consciousness, or the 4th leg/step to understand the Lord (8).

The true understanding of the Atma/soul of the creature is done with the advice and guidance given by erudite and enlightened teachers and ancient scriptures. It can be understood, comprehended and grasped only with the aid of an uncorrupt, unbiased and sharp intelligence, mind and discrimination faculty of the creature. This Atma/soul is self-luminous, enlightened and splendorous. It is devoid and free from any action or deed done at the behest of (or inspired by) ignorance (i.e., due to lack of wisdom, truthful knowledge and delusions). It has the ability, potential and prowess to eliminate the darkness of ignorance as well as its deluding and its incumbent shackling effect on the creature. It (Atma/soul) is eternally one, without a second, unique, non-dual, indivisible and an embodiment of supreme, absolute and universal bliss, happiness, peace and tranquility. It is the foundation and the resting place for all that exists; it is the only majesty and power. It does not have any trace of the darkness created by ignorance,

delusion and worldly attachment of any kind. [Since the microcosmic soul residing inside the creature is like the nuclei of the atom, the former being the miniscule image or the counterpart of the macrocosmic soul of the universe called Parmatma who is represented by the divine word symbol OM, which in turn is synonymous with the seed/root word for Sri Ram, that is 'Rang' (jka). Logically, therefore, the soul of the creature is the same as the supreme Brahm who is Lord Sri Ram.] Hence the seeker/aspirant must visualise that he is the same as Sri Ram, or there is no duality or difference between himself and the all-pervading and all-encompassing supreme Lord Sri Ram. This conclusion derived at by logical reasoning will inculcate the feeling in the seeker/aspirant that he posses all the characteristics, virtues, qualities and attributes associated with Sri Ram—such as possessing supreme bliss, peace, tranquility and serenity, eternal and unadulterated enlightenment, wisdom, knowledge, erudition and sagacity. It is this splendid and dazzling light of enlightenment etc. which makes the soul self-illuminated, and supremely blissful and contented" (9).

(b) Pranavo Panishad—"Now we shall elucidate about and unravel the secret of the supreme knowledge of Brahm, the transcendental Lord who manifested himself as Lord Vishnu whose deeds are most strange, mysterious, stupendous and fascinating. This secret, sublime and subtle knowledge called 'Brahma Vidya' is so potent and powerful that it is able to incorporate 'fire' in its self (1).

Those who are expert and well-versed in the knowledge pertaining to Brahm have unanimously asserted and declared that the divine word OM is the imperishable Brahm (i.e., it is a synonym for Brahm). Its form, habitat and existence in all the three dimensions of time (past, present, future) are being discussed now (2).

In it (the divine word OM) are incorporated the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), the three Lokas (worlds— celestial, terrestrial and subterranean; it also means 'Bhu' भू— earth, 'Bhuvaha' भुवः—the sky, 'Swaha' स्वः—heaven), the three Vedas (Rig, Sam, Yajur), the three divine fires (गार्हपत्य—Garhapatya meaning the fire of the household hearth, दक्षिणाग्नि—Dakshinagni meaning the fire used as a witness to charities, आहवनीय—Ahavaniya meaning the fire of the fire-sacrifice), the three full syllables or letters (A, U, M), and the half syllable (the 'ँ' Anuswar). This is the truthful, pure, auspicious and welfare providing form of Brahm (who is in the form of OM) (3).

The Rik/g Veda, the earth, the Garhapathya fire and Lord Brahma (the creator)—these entities are said to be incorporated and embodied in the first syllable/letter 'A' of the divine word OM representing Brahm, according to the definition and elucidation given by those who are well-versed in the knowledge pertaining to Brahm (4).

The Yajur Veda, the sky (of the solar system), the Dakshinagni fire and Lord Vishnu (the sustainer) —these are said to be incorporated and embodied in the 2nd syllable/letter 'U' of the divine word OM representing Brahm, and they impart great fame and majesty to it with their own divine glories (5).

The Sam Veda, the heavens (abode of Gods), the Ahavaniya fire and Lord Shiva (the annihilator) —these are said to be incorporated and embodied in the 3rd syllable/letter 'M' of the divine word OM representing Brahm, and lend their stupendous fame and majesty to its glory (6).

The radiant, bright and splendid glare of the sky in the vicinity of the Sun is incorporated in the 1st syllable/letter 'A', while the glorious illumination of the sky in the vicinity of a full moon is established symbolically in (i.e., represented by) the 2nd syllable/letter 'U' which is present in the middle of the divine word OM (7).

The last (3rd) syllable/letter 'M' represents the divine 'fire' element; it is a fire without any smoke (i.e., it is a brightly lit fire) and is as dazzling, brilliant and splendid as the electric. The three letters or syllables of OM (A, U, M) should be treated as embodying or personifying the combined glories of the Sun, the Moon and the Fire (8).

The light emanating from the wick of a burning lamp in which the flame is erect (vertical and burning brightly, without wavering) is equivalent to (or is incorporated in) the half-syllable ‘Anuswar’ (ँ), which is like a dot above a concave dish, present on the top of the geometrical symbol or sign or emblem representing OM, i.e. ‘ॐ’ (9).

The wick of that flame which is symbolic of the ‘Supreme Knowledge’, which in turn is synonymous with Brahm, is like the stem of a lotus flower. It appears to pass through the nostrils right above into the head and shines there. [This is a metaphoric representation of the brain which has the subtle intellect in it. It is the intellect that illuminates and brightens the personality of a creature. It is the intellect that illuminates the world for the creatures and removes the darkness of ignorance, it is the intellect which makes the brain worth its value—because even animals have a brain but no intellect like that of a wise man—and which sets it apart from a man's brain in whom the light of knowledge is extinguished just like the value and utility of a lamp lies in the lighted wick and the light emanating from it and not the size, design or quality of material used to make the unlighted lamp.] (10)

That lighted wick (representing the half-syllable or ‘Anuswar’ present on the top of the symbol of OM which is —ॐ) infuses life and exercises control over the creature by the means of 72 thousand ‘Naadis’ (network of nerves and veins) spread across the body (11).

The allegory of the chariot can be cited here— the ‘Anuswar’, sitting on the top, is the ‘charioteer’ because it is bright and illuminated like a wise and intelligent person who knows where to take the chariot while sitting astride it, the ‘Naadis’ are the ‘reins’, the various sense organs are like the ‘horses’, and the body is like the ‘chariot’ itself. The creature (the Atma which is his true and real form) is the ‘passenger’.

When a seeker/aspirant is just near attaining fulfillment of his aim of obtaining emancipation and salvation, he hears a resonating vibration like the sound emanating from a bell made of bronze when it is hit by a gong/hammer. This sound is that of OM (Pranav or Brahm) in its ‘sound’ form. All seekers aspire to hear it (12).

The seeker/aspirant who becomes engrossed in hearing that sound which represents the divine word OM, is said to or deemed to have acquired a stature which is equivalent to Brahm. He acquires the essence of bliss, beatitude, happiness and joy, called Amrit, which is the essential elixir of life, yearned for by those who are wise and enlightened. Verily, this is a certainty (13).]

एवं सदा जातपरात्मभावनः स्वानन्दतुष्टः परिविस्मृताखिलः।
आस्ते स नित्यात्मसुखप्रकाशकः साक्षाद्विमुक्तोऽचलवारिसिन्धुवत् ॥ ५२ ॥

evaṃ sadā jātaparātmabhāvanah
svānandatuṣṭaḥ parivismṛtākhilah /
āste sa nityātmasukhaprakāśakah
sākṣādvimukto’calavārisindhuvat // 52

52. In this way, the wise and realised Yogi (i.e. ascetic, the seeker, the one who meditates and contemplates upon the true self, the Atma), by constant practice and meditation upon the self as an image of the supreme Soul, becomes soaked, infused, drenched and intoxicated in profound bliss, peace and tranquility generated by remaining perpetually engrossed in this exercise of contemplation and meditation.

He becomes totally oblivious of the surrounding gross artificial world of material sense objects. Such a seeker who enjoys the bliss obtained by experiencing the truthful

conscious nature of the self (Atma) becomes liberated from the shackles/fetters of this mundane life, and can be likened to a calm, serene, placid, tranquil and pacific ocean not disturbed by swirling whirlpools, huge waves and vicious storms generated by agitations in the ocean by natural and geo-physical factors (52).

एवं सदाभ्यस्तसमाधियोगिनो निवृत्तसर्वेन्द्रियगोचरस्य हि।
विनिर्जिताशेषरिपोरहं सदा दृश्यो भवेयं जितषड्गुणात्मनः॥ ५३॥

evaṃ sadābhyastasaṃādhiyogino
nivr̥ttasarvendriyagocarasya hi /
vinirjitāśeṣariporaḥ saḍā
dr̥śyo bhaveyaṃ jitaṣaḍguṇātmanah // 53

53. Such a great and realised Yogi (ascetic) who regularly practices Samadhi¹, for whom the external objects pertaining to the five sense organs of perception² have become totally defunct and meaningless, completely extinct and annihilated, absolutely irrelevant and impertinent, who has vanquished all the enemies symbolized by such negative traits as anger, wrath and hate or worldly passions, lust, yearnings and ambitions etc., and who has conquered his 6 gross organs³—he is able to have regular communion with me; he can constantly witness and experience me; he can always see or visualise me (i.e. Sri Ram) in his heart (53).

[Note :- ¹The word Samadhi indicates the fourth state of consciousness called Turiya when the seeker/aspirant is in a trance like state of blissfulness, totally oblivious of the five gross sheaths surrounding him. In other words, he has transcended beyond the third stage of consciousness called the deep sleeper state. See also note to verse nos. 47-49 of this Canto as well as verse no. 53, Canto 1 of Lanka Kand.

²The five organs of perception are eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. The five perceptions that are related to them are sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. All these organs are concerned with the perception of the external world of material objects because each of these senses has something or the other to do with the material objects of the world. Their activities and field of action are limited to a specific area—for example, the eyes can only see and cannot hear or feel; the ears can hear but cannot touch or see. Besides this limitation, none of these organs can perform their functions independently because, for one, they depend on the Pran or the vital life present in the body to remain alive and active, and second, they depend on the mind and intellect to make sense out of those objects that fall within their jurisdiction. On the other hand, the Atma is self sufficient, independent and consciousness personified; it does not depend on any other entity to make it worthwhile.

³The six gross organs referred above are—one ‘objective mind’ (i.e. the subtle body; the intermediary gross element between the intellect and the physical body) and the five organs of perception such as the eye, nose, skin, tongue and ears, bringing the total to six. The mind is included as an organ because the negative traits mentioned in this verse such as anger and passions originate in the mind and not the other physical organs.]

ध्यात्वैवमात्मानमहर्निशं मुनिस्तिष्ठेत्सदा मुक्तसमस्तबन्धनः।
प्रारब्धमश्नन्नभिमानवर्जितो मय्येव साक्षात्प्रविलीयते ततः॥ ५४॥

dhyātvāivamātmānamaharnīṣaṃ muni-
 stiṣṭhetsyadā muktasamastabandhanaḥ /
 prārabdhamāśnannabhimānavarjito
 mayyeva sāṅkṣātpavilyate tataḥ // 54

54. A seeker hermit or sage should, in the above prescribed manner, constantly spend his time on contemplation and reflection upon his pure self called the Atma night and day. And while doing this, he should remain aloof (i.e. indifferent, unconcerned, uninterested, dispassionate, detached) from all the different worldly ties, relationships, obligations, compulsions and formalities etc. which are associated with this mundane, artificial and entrapping existence that act like fetters which shackle him. He should forsake his ego and pride of being the doer and feeler of anything (i.e. perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer personality), and stoically and with forbearance cope with and endure what comes his way as a result of his past deeds and their accumulated effects without getting either ruffled or rattled by them, or getting involved in them. The result of this is that at the end, he merges (coalesces) with me (54).

[Note :- The reason for such a creature merging with the Lord is that he breaks free from the cycle of birth and death by getting over the twin hurdles of deeds and their resultant effects as well as unfulfilled desired— both of which are the prime cause of the creature taking a new birth again. Obviously, when the cycle is broken, he manages to slip free from its endless bondage and escapes to his original base with the supreme Lord.]

आदौ च मध्ये च तथैव चान्ततो भवं विदित्वा भयशोककारणम्।
 हित्वा समस्तं विधिवादचोदितं भजेत्स्वमात्मानमथाखिलात्मनाम्॥ ५५॥

ādau ca madhye ca tathaiva cāntato
 bhavaṃ viditvā bhayaśokakāraṇam /
 hitvā samastaṃ vidhivādacoditaṃ
 bhajetsvamātmānamathākhilātmanām // 55

55. Recognising that the world—its beginning, currency and end—are all the cause of fear and sorrows of one kind or the other, the seeker should abandon all actions and deeds pertaining to this world notwithstanding that they are prescribed by the Vedas¹. Instead of this, he should worship and honour the pure Atma (supreme, conscious transcendental soul) which is the same whether it is the one residing in his own bosom or in the bosom of other creatures. [That is, he should remove the sense of duality and regard all as being images of the supreme Brahm.] (55).

[Note :- ¹The reader should read this verse in coordination with verse nos. 7-10; 14-23, and 42-46. The meaning is clear. The intention here is not to deride or demean the Vedas and their canons but to highlight the fact that mere mechanically following the letters of the various scriptures and proclamations of the Vedas will be a futile effort, a waste of labour and time if we do not understand the basic object of those exercises and the basic spirit of those proclamations or axioms. If we call ourselves well versed in the scriptures and still treat others with hate or have so

many negative traits such envy and jealousy, if we have pride and ego, if we cannot control our self in all respects, if we allow ourselves to hide our shortcomings behind the curtain of scriptural sanction, then we are only cheating ourselves besides defrauding others. Because when we quote the scriptures, then they should not be twisted and twirled to suit our vested interests. Though the scriptures prescribe doing of deeds, but at the same time they also emphasise not to get emotionally involved in them, not to have the sense of being the doer of those deeds, and to do them selflessly and as an offering to the fire sacrifice. Honestly, how many do deeds in this manner? Indeed, if the deeds are done in a properly sanctioned manner they would be liberating for one would then be serving the Lord by serving his creation. If that is true then one has no right over the fruits of those deeds, and neither should one feel dismayed and dejected at their failure or bad effects. To have such equanimity is very difficult if not impossible, and if one has indeed this high level of dispassion and erudition, then whether he does anything or not really does not matter. It is this that is meant by the scriptures when they sanction deeds.

Further, verse no. 57 below says that a wise sage should treat this world as a misconception of the reality while he remains in this world, going about doing his chores in a routine manner.]

आत्मन्यभेदेन विभावयन्निदं भवत्यभेदेन मयात्मना तदा।
यथा जलं वारिनिधौ यथा पयः क्षीरेवियद्व्योमन्यनिले यथानिलः॥ ५६॥

ātmanyabhedena vibhāvayannidaṃ
bhavatyabhedena mayātmānā tadā /
yathā jalaṃ vārinidhau yathā payaḥ
kṣīre viyadvyomnyanile yathānilaḥ // 56

56. Even as water merges and becomes one with the ocean, milk becomes one and inseparable from another sample of milk, one substratum of the sky becomes indistinguishable from the rest of the sky, and air is indivisible and inseparable from wind, likewise the seeker/aspirant should consider the entire manifest world (the illusionary but true-appearing world) as being the manifest form and inseparable from (i.e. indistinguishable from) his own Atma (which is pure consciousness). [In other words, a wise man should perceive no difference between his ‘self’ and the rest of the world. He should regard all as a manifestation of the same Atma.]

By extension, since the microcosmic Atma is synonymous with the macrocosmic Parmatma, the supreme transcendental Soul, the creature gets permanently established in the fact that the whole world is nothing else but the revelation or manifestation of the Parmatma which is me (Sri Ram) (56).

[Note :- The note to verse no. 51 above, though explaining the concept of OM, also elucidates the concept of the terrestrial soul being one with the cosmic soul. Citing the example of OM and its constituent letters, it is established that the cosmic soul that pervades in the entire creation is one and the same. It further propounds that one should take a holistic view of the creation and the Atma, and this erudition if properly cultivated will help the creature establish oneness with the cosmic soul in the form of Lord Ram.]

इत्थं यदीक्षेत हि लोकसंस्थितो जगन्मृषैवेति विभावयन्मुनिः।
निराकृतत्वाच्छ्रुतियुक्तिमानतो यथेन्दुभेदो दिशि दिग्भ्रमादयः॥ ५७॥

itthaṃ yadīkṣeta hi lokasaṃsthito
 jaganmr̥ṣaiveti vibhāvayanmuniḥ /
 nirākṛtatvācchrutiyuktimānato
 yathendubhedo dīśi digbhramādayaḥ // 57

57. The enlightened one who has to remain in this mundane world living the life destined for him and consequentially doing deeds and taking actions ascertained for him, should consider the world as false, illusionary and deceptive like a mirage. This world has innumerable hurdles, it has its share of grave handicaps, impediments and limitations which are vexing and confounding for the spirit according to the Srutis (Vedas), Yuktis (logic and reasoning) and Praman (proof and veracity). For example, the illusion created by waxing and waning of the moon appears to imply that the moon decreases and increases in shape and size, whereas this is not the case. Similarly, there is confusion regarding the various directions of the globe in the absence of the compass and without any proper guidance (57).

[Note :- The handicap and impediment referred to above relate to the basic tenets of the Vedas which clearly indicate what is true and what is false. The world does not pass the test established by the Vedas, and by extension, it does not stand the test of logic and cannot be either proved to be true or false conclusively by any logical, authentic proof or yardstick. So, in short, it is handicapped on account of sustainability—i.e. its existence cannot stand the rigors of irrefutable proof, unequivocal logic and universal laws as established by the Vedas.

The example of the moon shows that the ancient Vedantic philosophers were well versed in the science of astronomy. We all know that the moon does not change in physical shape or size, from the full to the new moon, from the dark to the full disc. It is the angle of the earth with respect to the moon that it appears to increase or diminish in shape from the crescent to a rounded disc. To believe that the moon changes itself in shape is absurd once we come to know the physics behind it.

Similarly, if we lose the compass, we are completely at sea and confounded about the four directions in absence of any other sign or landmark to identify a particular direction, say north or south, when we are lost in a desert. We might confuse the north for the south specially when the sun and the stars get obscured due to sand storms and the sand dunes keep shifting and changing their location, size and contours.

So, this verse essentially means that a wise, erudite, intelligent and sagacious aspirant should not be confounded, confused or vexed by myriad of precepts, tenets, theories and proclamations by various sources which are oftentimes contradictory to each other. Instead, he should treat this entire surrounding world as deceptive and as illusive as a mirage, and concentrate on the ultimate truth or reality as laid down in this whole Canto. The emphasis is on the realisation of the truth, on self-awareness, self-realisation and self-awakening more than anything else.]

यावन्न पश्येदखिलं मदात्मकं तावन्मदाराधनतत्परो भवेत् ।
 श्रद्धालुरत्यूजितभक्तिलक्षणो यस्तस्य दृश्योऽहमहर्निशं हृदि ॥ ५८ ॥

yāvanna paśyedakhilam madātmakam
 tāvanmadārāadhanatatparo bhavet /

śraddhāluratyūrjitabhaktilakṣaṇo
yastasya dr̥śyo'hamaharniśaṃ hr̥di // 58

58. Till the time the whole world does not appear to be my image or my manifestation (i.e. till the moment the seeker has not raised his thought patterns and intellectual insight and vision to the plane where he has realised the supreme truth as described in the foregoing verses, and sees the supreme Lord, who is the real and absolute Truth, in all the animate as well as the inanimate world because of the simple reason that the Lord is all-pervading and omnipresent, or conversely, the world is the cosmic body of the Viraat Purush representing the cosmic gross body of the macrocosmic soul) in the intellectual eyes and mental vision of the seeker, he should continue to worship me (here, 'worship me' means trying to concentrate one's attention towards the pure Atma by the process described in the preceding verses) to the exclusion of all other things in this world. True and faithful seekers and believers who have firm conviction, faith and belief in me, and who are my ardent devotees, experience me (i.e. come in contact with, or face to face with me) inside their hearts regularly day and night (58).

रहस्यमेतच्छ्रुतिसारसङ्ग्रहं मया विनिश्चित्य तवोदितं प्रिय।
यस्त्वेतदालोचयतीह बुद्धिमान् स मुच्यते पातकराशिभिः क्षणात्॥ ५९॥

rahasyametacchrutisārasaṅgrahaṃ
mayā viniścitya tavoditaṃ priya /
yastvetadālocayatīha buddhimān
sa mucyate pātakarāśibhiḥ kṣaṇāt // 59

59. Oh dear (i.e. Laxman)! I have told you the essence and substance of all the proclamations made by the Vedas; it incorporates all the essence of their axioms and maxims, all their tenets and philosophies. Any wise and erudite person who reflects and contemplates upon the pristine wisdom contained in this Canto shall be immediately freed from all sins, misdeeds and misdemeanors and their negative and demeaning effects (59).

भ्रातर्यदीदं परिदृश्यते जगन्मायैव सर्वं परिहृत्य चेतसा।
मद्भावनाभावितशुद्धमानसः सुखी भवानन्दमयो निरामयः॥ ६०॥

bhrātaryadīdaṃ paridr̥śyate jaga-
nmāyaiva sarvaṃ parihṛtya cetasā /
madbhāvanābhāvitaśuddhamānasah
sukhī bhavānandamayo nirāmayah // 60

60. Oh brother! Whatever manifest world that is visible is nothing else but consisting of Maya (i.e. it is like a mirage, delusionary and fake, like a shadow and most deceptive). Take it out (i.e. eject it) from your mind-intellect apparatus or from your sub-consciousness; do not pay any heed to it. Instead, you should focus your attention on me

and my true form. This would make you happy and blissful, contented and tranquil. You would become cleansed and purified in your mind and heart, and be without any mental anguish, perplexities, confusions and consternations (60).

यः सेवते मामगुणं गुणात्परं हृदा कदा वा यदि वा गुणात्मकम्।
सोऽहं स्वपादाञ्चितरेणुभिः स्पृशन् पुनाति लोकत्रितयं यथा रविः॥ ६१॥

yaḥ sevate māmagaṇaṁ guṇātparam
hrdā kadā vā yadi vā guṇātmakam /
so'haṁ svapādāñcitareṇubhiḥ sprśan
punāti lokatritayaṁ yathā raviḥ // 61

61. Those persons who have sincere and steady devotion for and remain focused on me who am beyond the purview and reach of all Gunas (virtues, qualities, characteristics, attributes, qualifications, specialties and honours), and am Nirgun (formless, attributeless, without any name, honours, titles and limitations), are deemed to be equivalent to me.

Similarly, those who worship, adore and honour in my Sagun form (that has a physical form, has certain attributes, virtues, characteristics, honours and features) are also considered as being equivalent to me.

They become so exalted that they can purify and cleanse the whole world by the dust of their feet even as the Sun clears the darkness of the entire world and illuminates it by its mere appearance (61).

विज्ञानमेतदखिलं श्रुतिसारमेकं वेदान्तवेद्यचरणेन मयैव गीतम्।
यः श्रद्धया परिपठेद् गुरुभक्तियुक्तो मद्रूपमेति यदि मद्रचनेषु भक्तिः॥ ६२॥

vijñānametadakhilam śrutisāramekam
vedāntavedyacaraṇena mayaiva gītam /
yaḥ śraddhayā paripaṭhed gurubhaktiyukto
madrūpameti yadi madvacaneṣu bhaktiḥ // 62

62. This unique, matchless, peerless and unparalleled knowledge, erudition and awakening, is the only and irrefutable essence (deduction, conclusion, substance, juice) of the Vedas and other scriptures. That is, it is the basic and fundamental tenet expounded by them. More importantly, this has been expounded (pronounced, proclaimed, declared, enunciated, promulgated and propagated) as a tenet and maxim by none but me who am the best expert in the knowledge of the Vedas and am the supreme divine holy Lord himself whose holy feet are sought after and worshipped by all. Any one who has firm faith, belief and conviction in his moral teacher and spiritual guide called a Guru, and reads/recites this Ram Gita with a firm conviction, unwavering faith and unflinching belief in my words, shall be considered equivalent to me in spiritual stature and sublime nature (62).

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Canto 2.7

Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 57-82. Here, Lord Ram has taught his mother Kaushalya before winding up his worldly affairs and reverting back into his cosmic form as the Viraat Purush.

इदानीमपि मे ज्ञानं भवबन्धनिवर्तकम्। यथा संक्षेपतो भूयात्तथा बोधय मां विभो॥ ५७॥
निर्वेदवादिनीमेवं मातरं मातृवत्सलः। दयालुः प्राह धर्मात्मा जराजर्जरितां शुभाम्॥ ५८॥

edānimapi me Jñānaṁ bhavabandhanivartakam /
yathā sankshapto bhuyāttthā bodhya mām vibho // 57
nirvedavādinimevaṁ mātaraṁ mātṛvatsalaḥ /
dayāluḥ prāha dharmātmā jarājararitām śubhām // 58

57-58. [Mother Kaushalya said to Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Vibho (omnipresent, all-pervading, almighty, eternal, benevolent, magnanimous, munificent Lord; it is an epithet for Lord Vishnu)! Tell me in brief some way by which I can still acquire that pristine wisdom, enlightened erudition and sublime knowledge of reality and truth which will help me cut through the web of this mundane existence and set myself free from its shackles’ (57).

Then the Lord, who is most devoted to his mother, is compassionate and merciful, righteous and virtuous, replied to his mother who had spoken such words of renunciation and detachment, was very aged, and had an infirm and worn-out body, but was most auspicious and virtuous (58)—

मार्गस्त्रयो मया प्रोक्ताः पुरा मोक्षाप्तिसाधकाः। कर्मयोगो ज्ञानयोगो भक्तियोगश्च शाश्वतः॥ ५९॥
भक्तिर्विभिद्यते मातस्त्रिविधा गुणभेदतः। स्वभावो यस्य यस्तेन तस्य भक्तिर्विभिद्यते॥ ६०॥

mārgāstrayo mayā proktāḥ purā mokṣāptisādhakāḥ /
karmayogo jñānayogo bhaktiyogaśca śāśvataḥ // 59
bhaktirvibhidyate mātastrividhā guṇabhedataḥ /
svabhāvo yasya yastena tasya bhaktirvibhidyate // 60

59-60. ‘In some ancient time, I had prescribed the 3-fold path to deliverance, emancipation and salvation—viz. ‘Karmyog’ (the path of action), Gyan Yog (the path of pursuing truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment), and Bhakti Yog (the path of devotion and service to the Lord). These paths are well established, and ancient, eternal and truthful (59).

Oh mother! Bhakti can be classified into three categories depending upon the mental setup of the seeker (60).

[Note :- The three paths emphasised by the Lord are briefly summarized as follows-- lead to self realisation in a man or makes him aware of the super conscious residing in him. They are — (i) Karma Yoga, (ii) Gyan Yoga, and (iii) Bhakti Yoga.

(i) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(ii) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(iii) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.]

यस्तु हिंसां समुद्दिश्य दम्भं मात्सर्यमेव वा। भेददृष्टिश्च संरम्भी भक्तो मे तामसः स्मृतः॥ ६१॥

yastu hiṃsāṃ samuddiśya dambhaṃ mātsaryameva vā /
bhedadr̥ṣṭiśca saṃrambhī bhakto me tāmasaḥ smṛtaḥ // 61

61. [There are three types of devotees depending upon the predominance of one or the other types of the three qualities called Gunas in them.]

Those who are savage and cruel, those who have arrogance, vanity, ego and false pride, those who have hatred, animosity, envy, malice, ill-will and jealousy in their heart, those who are biased and see duality in this creation, have vested interests and are not equitable, even and uniform towards all, and those who have anger and mercurial temper, are wrathful and seek vengeance—such persons are called 'Tamas Bhakts'. [That is, such devotees have the worst type of qualities in them.] (61).

फलाभिसन्धिर्भोगार्थी धनकामो यशस्तथा। अर्चादौ भेदबुद्ध्या मां पुजयेत्स तु राजसः॥ ६२॥

phalābhisandhirbhogārthī dhanakāmo yaśastathā /
arcādaṁ bhedabuddhyā māṃ pūjayetsa tu rajasah // 62

62. Those who seek, yearn for or covet rewards, those who seek and yearn for comforts or pleasures of the materialistic world, gratification of senses and pursue wealth and fame, and those who differentiate between various methods to worship me—such persons are called 'Rajas Bhakts'. [Rajas is the medium quality in a man.] (62).

परस्मिन्नर्पितं यस्तु कर्म निर्हरणाय वा। कर्तव्यमिति वा कुर्याद्भेदबुद्ध्या स सात्त्विकः॥ ६३॥

parasminnarpitaṃ yastu karma nirharaṇāya vā /
kartavyamiti vā kuryādbhedabuddhyā sa sātṭvikaḥ // 63

63. Those who have the thought that one must not sit idle and instead do something, and those who do deeds in order to offer all the rewards to the Lord, or in other words, regards all the work as being Lord's work and himself as merely doing his assigned duties— persons with such a thought process and inclination of mind are called 'Satwic Bhakts' (63).

मद्गुणाश्रयणादेव मय्यनन्तगुणालये। अविच्छिन्ना मनोवृत्तिर्यथा गङ्गाम्बुनोऽम्बुधौ॥ ६४॥
तदेव भक्तियोगस्य लक्षणं निर्गुणस्य हि। अहैतुक्यव्यवहिता या भक्तिर्मयि जायते॥ ६५॥
सा मे सालोक्यसामीप्यसार्ष्टिसायुज्यमेव वा। ददात्यपि न गृह्णन्ति भक्ता मत्सेवनं विना॥ ६६॥

madguṇāśrayaṇādeva mayyanantagūṇālaye /
avicchinṇā manovṛttiriyathā gaṅgāmbuno'mbudhau // 64
tadeva bhaktiyogasya lakṣaṇaṃ nirguṇasya hi /
ahaitukyavyavahitā yā bhaktirmayi jāyate // 65
sā me sālokyasāmīpyasārṣṭisāyujyameva vā /
dadātyapi na gṛhṇanti bhaktā matsevanaṃ vinā // 66

64-66. If the natural and inherent tendencies and inclinations of a person's mind and intellect are constantly, consistently and persistently diverted towards me and fixed upon me and my immeasurably auspicious virtues and divine form that is sublime, ethereal, eternal and transcendental, then these are the signs of my devotion that is called 'Nirgun Bhakti' (i.e. devotion for the supreme transcendental Being who is without attributes, forms and names). Towards this end, the medium is to sing my auspicious glories and virtues deeds (by narrating, reading, reciting, singing in unison, writing, discussing and thinking about my divine stories, qualities and the noble virtues and values for which I stand). In this state of existence, the devotee loses his individuality and merges his own self with me even as the water of the holy river Ganges ceaselessly and constantly flows into and merges with the ocean to become one with it when it falls in it.

As a result of this unwavering, steady, consistent and constant devotion for me that sprouts in the pure heart of my ardent and wise devotee who is selfless and sincere in his spiritual pursuits, four types of Muktis are easily available. These four forms of emancipation and salvation that are bestowed upon him are known as (a) Salokya, (b) Samipya, (c) Saristi, and (d) Saujya.

But my true devotee is so devoted to me that he would rather choose to serve me than accept any one or more forms of Mukti. [That is, a true and ardent devotee does not accept them or anything else except the opportunity to serve me, even if these Mokshas or Muktis are offered to him for the asking.] (64-66).

[Note :- The four categories of emancipation and salvation as described in verse no. 66 are as follows :— (a) Salokya—To attain Vaikunth or heaven or the abode of Lord Vishnu; in other words to live in the abode of the chosen deity; (b) Samipya—To remain close to the Lord every moment; (c) Saristi, also known as Sarupya—To achieve glory, fame and renown similar to the Lord; to have a form and virtues similar to the chosen deity; and (d) Saujya—To become one with the Lord; to merge one's own self with the chosen deity.]

स एवात्यन्तिको योगो भक्तिमार्गस्य भामिनि। मद्भावं प्राप्नुयात्तेन अतिक्रम्य गुणत्रयम्॥ ६७॥

sa evātyantiko yogo bhaktimārgasya bhāmini /
madbhāvaṃ prāpnuyātena atikramya guṇatrayam // 67

67. Oh noble mother! This is the best, foremost and most important means and path to adopt while following the path of devotion and worship. [The 'means and path' referred here are the ones prescribed in verse no. 64-66.] By adopting it and following it, the devotee transcends all the three Gunas (Satwic, Rajsic, Tamsic) and becomes one with me (67).

महता कामहनेन स्वधर्माचरणेन च। कर्मयोगेन शस्तेन वर्जितेन विहिंसनात्॥ ६८॥
मदर्शनस्तुतिमहापूजाभिः स्मृतिवन्दनैः। भूतेषु मद्भावनया सङ्गेनासत्यवर्जनैः॥ ६९॥
बहुमानेन महतां दुःखिनामनुकम्पया। स्वसमानेषु मैङ्गला च यमादीनां निषेवया॥ ७०॥
वेदान्तवाक्यश्रवणान्मम नामानुकीर्तनात्। सत्सङ्गेनार्जवेणैव ह्यहमः परिवर्जनात्॥ ७१॥
कांक्षया मम धर्मस्य परिशुद्धान्तरो जनः। मद्गुणश्रवणादेव याति मामञ्जसा जनः॥ ७२॥

mahatā kāmahīnena svadharmācaraṇena ca /
karmayogena śastena varjiteṇa vihiṃsanāt // 68
maddarśanastutimahāpūjābhiḥ smṛtivandanaiḥ /
bhūteṣu madbhāvanayā saṅgenāsatyavarjanaiḥ // 69
bahumānena mahatāṃ duḥkhiṇāmanukampayā /
svasamāneṣu maitryā ca yamādīnāṃ niṣevayā // 70
vedāntavākyaśravaṇānmama nāmānukīrtanāt /
satsaṅgenārjavenaiva hyahamaḥ parivarjanāt // 71
kāṅkṣayā mama dharmasya parīśuddhāntaro janah /
madguṇaśravaṇādeva yāti māmāñjasā janah // 72

68-72. Now I shall tell you other means to have devotion for the Nirgun form of the Lord—i.e. the formless, attributeless, nameless, unqualified and sublime entity that is all-pervading, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, transcendental and supreme in the creation.

One should follow most righteously and selflessly the assigned duties and behavioural norms according to the section of the society to which one belongs without any attachments to the actions and the deeds as well as their results; one should follow the best doctrine of non-violence while doing anything (68); one should reverentially have my Darshan (holy viewings of my relics, pilgrim sites, symbols etc.); one should

pray to me and sing devotional hymns in my honour; one should worship me, show respect and reverence to me and adore me; one should constantly remember and honour me; one should regard all creatures as my image (or in other words, think that I am present in all the creatures); one should abandon lies, fraud, cheating, deceit and falsehood, and instead of it, one should find and pursue the company of saints and holy people (69); one should show the greatest of respect and honour to those who are noble and great souls; one should be merciful, kind and compassionate towards those who are miserable, distressed, unfortunate, in need, in agony and suffering; one should befriend people of same standing in society (i.e. be on friendly terms with one's peers and compatriots); one should rigorously follow the laws of 'Yam and Niyam' (i.e. restraint of passions, sense organs, mind-intellect apparatus etc. is called Yam, and following the path of righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility is called Niyam) (70); one should attentively hear the various edicts, proclamations, tenets, maxims and great sayings as pronounced by the Vedas; one should chant and sing my holy name, glories and virtues in chorus with a group of other devotees; one should have the company (communion, interaction) of holy, pious and saintly people (where spiritual matters are talked about) as well as have humble, soft, sweet and pleasant temperament and demeanors; one should abandon Ahankar (ego, pride, haughtiness and arrogance) (71); and one should have an honest and sincere wish and desire to follow the auspicious path of spiritualism and righteousness—such a person is deemed to have purified and cleansed his mind-intellect complex (the subtle body of the creatures) from all impurities. Having done so, if he hears the legends of my auspicious and noble virtues, glories, values and characteristics, he can easily attain me (i.e. my Nirgun form). That is, he merges his soul into my supreme Soul and becomes one with me (72).

यथा वायुवशाद्गन्धः स्वाश्रयाद्घ्राणमाविशेत्। योगाभ्यासरतं चित्तमेवमात्मानमाविशेत्॥ ७३॥

yathā vāyuvśādgandhaḥ svāśrayādghrāṇamāviśet /
yogābhyāsarataṃ cittamevamātmānamāviśet // 73

73. Even as 'smell' (aroma, perfume, scent, fragrance, odour) drifts away from its place of origin/source, and aided by the wind/air it enters through the nostrils (the organ for smell) and is then sensed by the creature, the mind-intellect complex (the subtle body of the creature) which is engrossed and soaked in the practice of Yoga (meditation and sincere efforts to understand the true nature of the Atma by concentration, contemplation and reflection) also gets inclined towards the Atma and ultimately merges with the Atma (which is pure consciousness, the ultimate reality and an irrefutable truth) (73).

सर्वेषु प्राणिजातेषु ह्यहमात्मा व्यवस्थितः। तमज्ञात्वा विमूढात्मा कुरुते केवलं बहिः॥ ७४॥

sarveṣu prāṇijāteṣu hyahamātmā vyavasthitaḥ /
tamajñātvā vimūḍhātmā kurute kevalaṃ bahiḥ // 74

74. I am the one who is present in the form of the Atma or soul (pure consciousness) in all the creatures. An ignorant and foolish person who is unaware of this basic fact

associates himself with the external world or the external features of the creature. [That is, he treats the gross world as the real thing and the gross body of the creature as its truthful identity. This fundamental error of conception is at the root cause of all perplexities and consternations in this world.] (74).

क्रियोत्पन्नैर्नैकभेदैर्द्रव्यैर्मे नाम्ब तोषणम्। भूतावमानिनार्चयामर्चितोऽहं न पूजितः॥ ७५॥

kriyotpannairnaikabhedairdravyairme nāmba toṣaṇam /
bhūtāvamāninārcāyāmarcito'haṁ na pūjitaḥ // 75

75. But mere physical, mechanical activity of doing worship and adoration does not please me. Those people who reproach, show contempt, disrespect, look down upon, scoff at and treat any living being with disdain (i.e. insult them, scorn at them, subject them to ridicule and humiliation, hate and detest other living creatures) and pretend to worship and adore me in an idol/icon/statue/image/any other symbol—verily I say, I don't accept their worship! (75).

तावन्मामर्चयेद्देवं प्रतिमादौ स्वकर्मभिः। यावत्सर्वेषु भूतेषु स्थितं चात्मनि न स्मरेत्॥ ७६॥

tāvanmāmarcayeddevaṁ pratimādaḥ svakarmabhiḥ /
yāvatsarveṣu bhūteṣu sthitaṁ cātmani na smaret // 76

76. I, who am the supreme Lord, shall be worshipped in idols and other forms by various rituals only till the time the seeker does not realise or recognise that I am present in all the creatures as well inside the seeker himself in the form of his pure Atma/soul/consciousness (76).

[Note :- (i) Verse nos. 74-76 should be read in conjunction. The meaning is resoundingly clear—if we think that we are superior to others in anyway because we worship any particular form or symbol which the other person does not, and subject him to scorn and ridicule—calling him a heretic, a non-believer—we are living in a fool's paradise. The Lord God can never be deceived by our pretensions of holiness and he cannot be pleased with us because, as verse no.75 testifies, the Lord lives in the other person also as much as he lives in the idol, statue, image or any other symbol. Insulting or deriding any person for his personal views and method of worship of the Lord makes a fool of ourselves. In a similar vein, if we have the powerful enough eyes to see life in an idol or image or any other form or symbol of the divinity, shouldn't we see the Lord in a live creature who is, by the Lord's own testimony, an image of the Lord himself. This is the essence of verse no. 76. See also verse nos. 77-78 below which are very explicit on this subject. Though Sri Ram has expounded 3-fold path to Moksha (verse no. 59), and says that it can be achieved by following any one of the paths (verse nos. 81-82) according to the mental caliber of the devotee or seeker, he has—on a separate occasion—emphasised that the path of Gyan (truthful knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment, contemplation, discrimination, delving deep into the basics of any thing to arrive at the truth by self study, constant and persistent pursuit of truth and reality, relentless questioning and eliminating the chaff from the grain using the process of Neti-Neti prescribed by the Vedas) is the supreme and most desired path to follow. (See Uttar Kand, Canto 5 called Ram Gita which is the highest citadel in spiritual realm, coming out from the mouth of Sri Ram himself, and a thorough reading of it will clarify the above observations).

(ii) So, we may say, in simple language that idol and physical ritualistic worship is only a primary stage for the seeker in the path of spiritualism. It is akin to a primary school. One cannot call oneself educated by merely passing a high school certificate exam, for the world of education and knowledge is very vast. After high school, there is secondary, graduate, post graduate, doctoral levels of education to be done to be called really educated. Similarly, there are higher stages of worship and adoration for the Lord than mere physical rituals done in mechanical way.

(iii) Incidentally, there are a number of Upanishads that say almost an identical thing in explicit terms. Some are—(a) Maitreyu-panishad, canto 2, verse no.21, 26; (b) Jabal Darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.50-59; and (c) Sanyaso-panishad, canto 2, verse no.74,75, 97.]

यस्तु भेदं प्रकुरुते स्वात्मनश्च परस्य च। भिन्नदृष्टेर्भयं मृत्युस्तस्य कुर्यान्न संशयः॥ ७७॥

yastu bhedaṃ prakurute svātmanaśca parasya ca /
bhinnadrṣṭerbhayaṃ mṛtyustasya kuryānna saṁśayaḥ // 77

77. He who distinguishes between his own Atma (microcosmic soul which is pure consciousness) and the Parmatma (macrocosmic, transcendental, supreme Soul which is also pure, sublime consciousness) is bound to have fear from death, there is no doubt about it (77).

[Note :-If one is foolish enough not to understand the basic tenet of spiritualism that the Atma of the individual is the same as the Atma of the creation, and deliverance entails merger of these two into one single indistinguishable entity, and that this Atma is imperishable and eternal, is without any fears and consternations, is unattached to this world, does not do anything that would force it to enter the cycle of birth and death in order to bear the fruits of the deeds that it has done, and so on and so forth as described in the various gospels of this Ramayan, then obviously he fears death even as a man is afraid of a ghost if he does not realise that there is in fact no thing as a ghost; the latter is simply an imagination of a hallucinating mind.]

मामतः सर्वभूतेषु परिच्छिन्नेषु संस्थितम्। एकं ज्ञानेन मानेन मैत्र्या चार्चेदभिन्नधीः॥ ७८॥

māmataḥ sarvabhūteṣu paricchinneṣu saṁsthitam /
ekaṃ jñānena mānena maitryā cārchedabhinnadhiḥ // 78

78. Hence, my true devotee is one who does not discriminate between different creatures and recognises that I am universally present uniformly in all of them, as well as everywhere. With this knowledge and awareness, he worships me by showing respect and honour, friendship and brotherhood to all, without any discrimination and distinction (78).

[Note—This verse as well as the following one and the ones appearing earlier in connection with symbol worship are prime examples of secular credentials of Sri Ram. It is an irony that Adhyatma Ramayan's pristine philosophy and broad outlook has not opened our eyes as much as it should have done.]

चेतसैवानिशं सर्वभूतानि प्रणमेत्सुधीः। ज्ञात्वा मां चेतनं शुद्धं जीवरूपेण संस्थितम्॥ ७९॥

cetasaivānīśaṃ sarvabhūtāni praṇametsudhīḥ /
jñātvā māṃ cetanaṃ śuddhaṃ jīvarūpeṇa saṁsthitam // 79

79. Recognising the fact that my divine, pure, conscious, eternal, truthful, supreme, sublime form resides in all the creatures (or manifests itself in the form of different creatures), a wise person is he who mentally bows before and shows respects and honour to all the creatures, day and night (i.e. always; constantly, consistently and persistently) (79).

[Note :-The Lord refers to the Atma that is uniformly and universally present in all the creatures in this world. This individual Atma is none other than the supreme Soul which is synonymous with Parmatma in the divine being of Lord Ram. Therefore, all the creatures of this creation are none but the same supreme transcendental Atma revealed in as many forms as there are creatures.]

तस्मात्कदाचिन्नेक्षेत भेदमीश्वरजीवयोः। भक्तियोगो ज्ञानयोगो मया मातरुदीरितः॥ ८०॥

tasmātkadācīnnekṣeta bhedamīśvarajīvayoḥ /
bhaktiyogo jñānayogo mayā mātārudīritaḥ // 80

80. Hence, one must never distinguish between a living creature (Jiva) and God, the Lord. Oh mother! I have described to you in brief about the two paths of Bhakti (devotion and worship) as well as of Gyan (knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment) (80).

आलम्ब्यैकतरं वापि पुरुषः शुभमृच्छति। ततो मां भक्तियोगेन मातः सर्वहृदि स्थितम्॥ ८१॥
पुत्ररूपेण वा नित्यं स्मृत्वा शान्तिमवाप्स्यसि। श्रुत्वा रामस्य वचनं कौसल्यानन्दसंयुता॥ ८२॥

ālambyaikataraṃ vāpi puruṣaḥ śubhamṛcchati /
tato māṃ bhaktiyogena mātāḥ sarvahr̥di sthitam // 81
putrarūpeṇa vā nityaṃ smṛtvā śāntimavāpsyasi /
śrutvā rāmasya vacanaṃ kausalyānandasamyutā // 82

81-82. A man reaps immense benefits, welfares and auspiciousness by adopting and following any one of these two paths. Hence, oh mother, by recognising the fact that I am present in the heart of all creatures (i.e. following the path of 'Gyan') (81), or by constantly remembering me as your son Ram by following the path of devotion (or Bhakti), you shall find peace and tranquility'.

Hearing these words of Sri Ram, Kaushalya was fully contented and exhilarated (82).

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

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(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1

and 2; (17) “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” or the “Aadi Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) ‘Dohawali’; (2) ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(A-3) A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, otherwise also known as the “Ramayana” according to Goswami Tulsidas. My English version of this Book is comprehensive and an elaborate one, as it runs into many thousands of pages that endeavour to explain each single verse of the Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ in fine detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

(c) The following Books have been published in ‘Printed-Book Deluxe Editions’ by a reputed Indian Publisher (details given below) :

1. Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1= Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.]

2. English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.

3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

4. English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

5. A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (C):

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